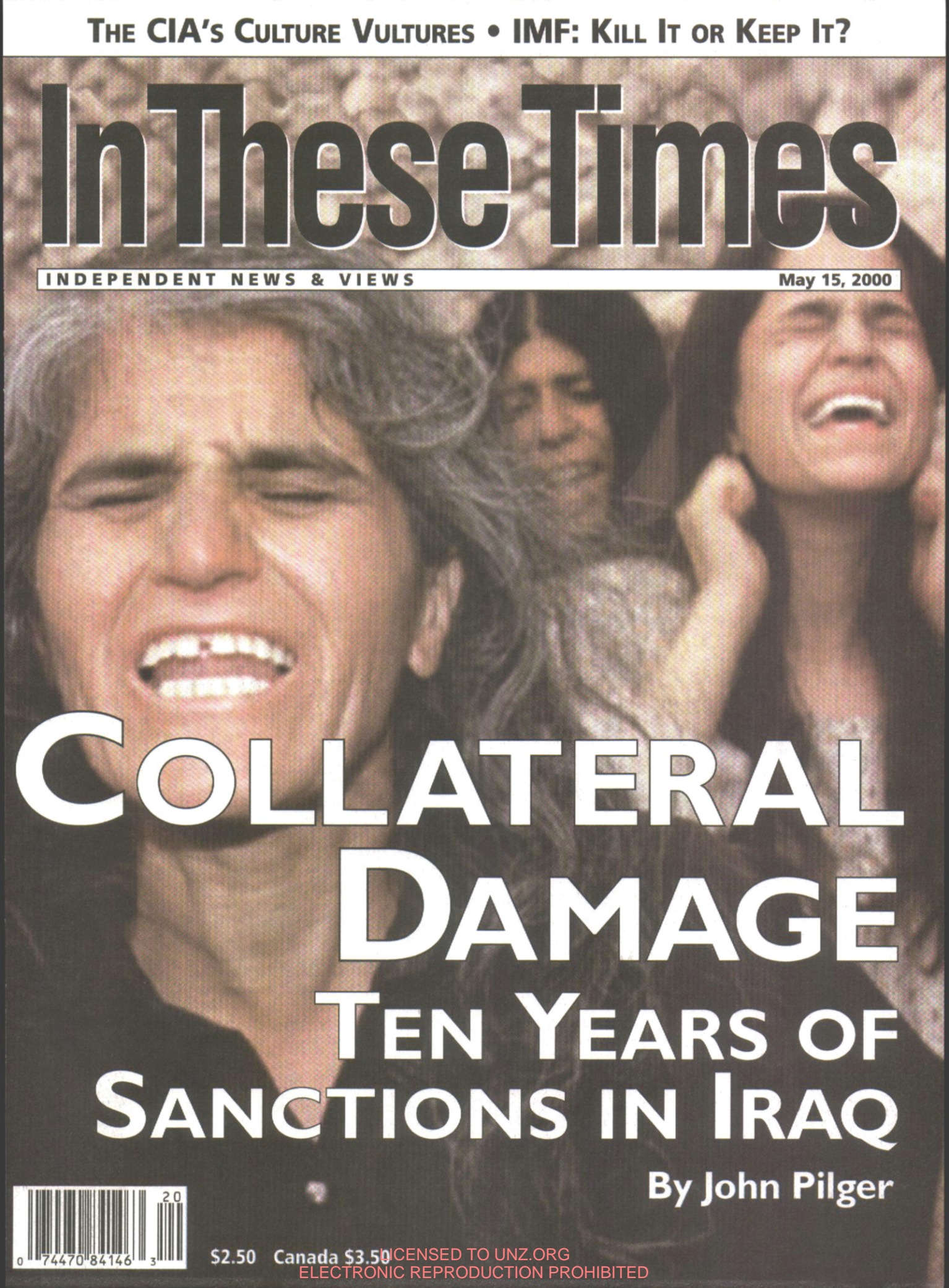


THE CIA'S CULTURE VULTURES • IMF: KILL IT OR KEEP IT?

# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

May 15, 2000



## COLLATERAL DAMAGE TEN YEARS OF SANCTIONS IN IRAQ

By John Pilger



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# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

"... with liberty and justice for all"

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## Letters

### Hasty on Haiti

Catherine Orenstein's article on Haiti's upcoming elections was informative, but she forgot several important details in her summary of Haiti's 1991 coup and subsequent democratic restoration ("Squeeze and Vote," April 3).

The military force that ousted Jean-Bertrand Aristide and current president René García Preval was more than just "elite-backed." Its leader, Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras, and many other high-level members of the Haitian army were trained at the School of the Americas, the U.S. military institution at Fort Benning, Georgia. There, they learned coup and population suppression tactics that they were expected to use in situations such as the ascension of a social democrat like Aristide.

Moreover, the sanctions against the provisional government of Joseph Nerette—initiated by the Organization of American States in Washington—were purposefully violated by the United States. As a leak to *The Associated Press* reported, the State Department explicitly instructed Texaco to continue shipping oil to the politically powerful families regardless of the embargo.

Finally, the FRAPH organization, composed of violent criminals and paramilitary groups that terrorized the Haitian countryside during the Cedras/Nerette regime, was funded by the CIA. FRAPH started riots in Port-au-Prince that prevented Aristide's restoration when Aristide refused to capitulate to U.S. neoliberal demands.

In all, Orenstein should be more hesitant to criticize Aristide's acceptance of World Bank-type policies; they were literally the only way that the United States allowed democracy to continue in Haiti.

Benjamin Wheeler  
New York

### Poison Propaganda

Terry J. Allen's article about the dangers of the chemical weapons being used by police would have been far more potent if she had not forgotten all about Vietnam ("Chemical Cops," April 3). Sure, the police, the government and the media call CS a "non-lethal tear gas," but the Vietnamese can testify that it is neither. In fact, so did the U.S. Army handbook before the United States became the first country since World War I to engage in massive chemical warfare.

As documented in a 1966 *Viet Report*, the U.S. Army classified CS as both a nausea gas and an asphyxiating agent that is lethal at 11 to 25 mg per cubic meter. This is a small fraction of the concentration that was used to

turn the underground shelters of the rural Vietnamese population into death chambers.

To legitimize this use of CS, it was necessary to magically redefine it as a "non-lethal tear gas." But we need to know better, and we also need to understand what we lose whenever we forget about Vietnam.

H. Bruce Franklin  
Newark, New Jersey

### Mayor Hillary?

Laura Flanders seems to think that Hillary Clinton is campaigning to be the next mayor of New York City and therefore should challenge the current mayor on the Diallo verdict by marching with the Rev. Al Sharpton and Saiku Diallo ("Hillary Runs for Cover," April 3). It would be totally out of place for a senatorial candidate to exploit our tragedies for her own benefit.

Enid Morrison  
Brooklyn, New York

### Righteous Gentiles

In his otherwise informed and informative review of *Western Amerykanski: Polish Poster Art & the Western* ("How the East Was Won," April 3), Jeff Sharlet makes a gratuitous comment about "Poland's participation in their own hometown massacre of the Jews." Sharlet seems blithely unaware that Poland fought on the Allied side in World War II from 1939 to 1945, that the country suffered the loss of 3 million of its non-Jewish citizens during that war, and that Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Israel, honors more righteous gentiles—people who assisted Jews during the Holocaust—from Poland than from any other country.

John J. Kulczycki  
Chicago

**Jeff Sharlet replies:** Everything John Kulczycki says about Polish participation and suffering and heroism during World War II is essentially correct—facts of which I'm as much aware as the readers, who I presumed didn't require a primer on World War II history. It's disturbing, however, that Kulczycki implies that these actions and events somehow make untrue the fact of mass Polish participation in the fascist slaughter of Jews, Roma and gays.

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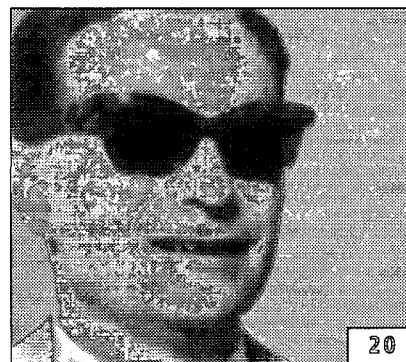
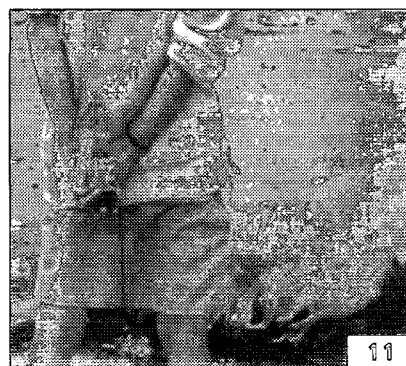
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# Capital Crimes

By Jason Vest

**A**s *In These Times* goes to press, thousands of protesters are streaming into Washington to protest the neoliberal and neocolonial policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. With this event, the coalition that came together in Seattle should cement its status as a bona fide movement, one with greater potential to effect truly global change than any of its predecessors.

Part of what's so inspiring about the movement is the passion it has for thinking globally. At a time when the American government (by design) and most Americans (by complacency) revel in the country's status as Sole Remaining Superpower, it's rousing to see scores of people—especially the younger ones—speaking out zealously and cogently about injustices committed by multinationals in distant corners of the world. But as the movement continues to build momentum, it would be well-served to consider injustices closer to home, starting with one of the places that needs and deserves actual democracy the most: the District of Columbia.

Lord Cromer once famously said of Great Britain, "We do not rule Egypt, we rule those who rule Egypt." Much the same can be said of the federal government and its distinctly imperialist approach to the overwhelmingly African-American Colony of Columbia. While the past 30 years have seen some progress—since 1974, Washington residents have elected their own mayor and City Council members—the subjects are still taxed without representation. Despite having a population as large as half a dozen states, and paying more federal taxes than some of those states, the colony still only has one non-voting "delegate" in the House of Representatives. Its two "shadow senators" (both lobbyists for statehood) are allowed into the Senate dining room, but never onto the Senate floor.

As Paul Strauss, one of the shadow senators, repeatedly has pointed out, there is nothing more frightening to

the mostly white members of the world's greatest deliberative body than the prospect of two additional members speaking for an exclusively urban populace. After all, Washington always has been at the mercy of "men also not acquainted with the minute and local interests of the place," as Massachusetts Rep. John Bacon characterized Congress back in 1803.

This is particularly galling given that Congress—not the city's elected government—ultimately decides everything about the colony, from what money is appropriated and how it's spent, to the taxi fare schedule and naming of streets. Congress has exempted more than half of the city's real estate from property taxes; Congress also has decreed that the approximately 1.5 million people who work in the colony but live outside it cannot be taxed by the city.

Previously tormented by one demagogic mayor who ruled a corrupt machine, the colony is now supervised by another colonialist from central casting: the

technocrat administrator. Enamored with "privatization," Mayor Anthony Williams' administration continues to dismantle the public sector. Simultaneously, plans are underway to use public funds to purchase and renovate the 22,000-square-foot Old Navy Hospital on Capitol Hill so it can become the "mayoral mansion." This is further proof, as irrepressible progressive and statehood activist Sam Smith notes, that D.C. is run by "an ineffective, enervated, self-important elite that continues to waste our time and our energies with their puny schemes and serfs' vision."

It likely sent a shudder down the spines of city and federal officials alike when, on April 10, a handful of local activists—angered by a mayoral policy that penalizes tenants for their slumlords' sins—showed

**As we mobilize for global justice, we should contest the Washington consensus in all its forms.**

up outside the mayor's office accompanied by about 50 anti-IMF demonstrators, who were there to show solidarity and highlight the parallels between global and local perils. As we mobilize for global justice, we should contest the Washington consensus in all its forms: as a global paradigm, and as a threat to democracy in the city that bears its name. ■

Terry LaBan





## No Justice for Janitors

L.A. workers take the first step toward a national strike

By David Bacon

LOS ANGELES—This is the year janitors have been waiting for—the year they plan to get their wages back.

Five years ago, Service Employees locals from San Diego to Seattle began lining up their contracts, demanding agreements that all expire this spring. In Oakland and Silicon Valley, workers even went on strike to get the 2000 expiration date. Big building service companies, who clean offices around the country, have fought this campaign. They knew what the union had in mind: coordinated action around the country. And starting in Los Angeles, their fears were realized.

Janitors voted to strike on April 4. That night, they walked out of the city's gleaming glass office towers. The 18 affected contractors were ready. Confrontations escalated in the parking garages below the skyscrapers, as police attempted to escort strikebreakers through the picket lines. In many cases, large groups of striking janitors held the police off and kept the scabs out.

When contractors tried to get an injunction to stop the picketing, Judge Dzintra Janavs turned them down. Meanwhile, Teamster UPS drivers and garbage collectors refused to cross the line. As the week wore on, marches of thousands of janitors and supporters swept west from downtown to Century City, led by Jesse Jackson and California State Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa (a prospective Los Angeles mayoral candidate), demanding that the contractors negotiate.

Century City has become the target of the Los Angeles strike for good reason. In the mid-'80s, building service contractors throughout the city dumped their union work force of primarily African-American janitors and went nonunion. Riding a wave of immigration provoked by wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and economic crisis in Mexico, the contrac-

tors assembled a new work force. They assumed immigrants had low expectations and could be easily intimidated into accepting the minimum wage of \$3.35 an hour, instead of the old \$7.32 union scale.

They miscalculated badly. Immigrant workers responded to the appeals of union organizers, who developed a new strategy they called "Justice for Janitors". In a defining moment in 1990, the Los Angeles police attacked thousands of immigrant workers marching through the towers of Century City. Dozens were badly beaten. Uproar over police violence rocked the city and produced sufficient pressure to force the biggest contractors to sign union agreements. Once again, SEIU represented some 8,500 Los Angeles janitors, who clean 70 percent of the county's office buildings. After a rough struggle over leadership of the Los Angeles union, janitors across California were consolidated into one union—Local 1877. But the wage scale of a decade earlier had been lost.

What happened in Los Angeles was not unique. Throughout the country, building service companies broke wage scales in areas where the union had been strong, or kept wages low by keeping the union out. Only the largest cities, like San Francisco and New York, kept buildings under contract and wages intact. To reverse the tide, organizers began using civil disobedience, corporate campaigns and broad community support coalitions to reorganize the industry. The bedrock principle of Justice for Janitors was to keep the pressure on the building owners, holding them responsible for the conditions of those who clean their buildings.

In Silicon Valley and Sacramento, Local 1877 first set its sights on Apple and Hewlett-Packard. After grueling campaigns, including a 100-mile march through torrential rainstorms to Hewlett-Packard's headquarters in Palo Alto, the union finally regained contracts covering

a big majority of the industry in that region. In other cities, janitors used the same tactic: focus on the building owners, the ones with the money and economic control.

Some building service companies have grown into multinational corporations themselves, especially industry leaders American Building Maintenance and OneSource. OneSource (formerly ISS) has been the principle target in Century City. ISS was bought out by British



DAVID BACON

Los Angeles janitors are demanding a living wage.

financier Michael Ashcroft, who runs it as part of Carlisle Holdings, based in tax-free Belize. The company has contracts in 38 states and last year reported revenues of more than \$800 million.

In Los Angeles, the Building Owners and Managers Association says it is not involved in the strike and plays no role in setting janitors' salaries. But the owners play contractors against each other, pushing cleaning rates lower, while the contractors compete by cutting wages to the bottom. In Century City, for example, the monthly rental rate for office space in the towers averages \$2.56 per

square foot. A Los Angeles janitor normally cleans 17,000 square feet of office space a night, including four bathrooms. Space that rents for more than \$43,000 a month is cleaned by a worker earning \$6.90 an hour.

The union's demand in Los Angeles is a dollar an hour raise for each of the next three years, which will reverberate through the rest of the country as more contracts expire. In Los Angeles, that would bring the top scale, now \$7.90 an hour, close to what the old union rate would be today—\$12, taking inflation into account. That's roughly the union rate in cities where the union has kept control of the industry.

Contractors are offering much less—a mere 40- to 50-cent raise. But the contractors won't even negotiate until the workers "come to their senses," according to Dick Davis, negotiator for the 18 contractors who have signed Local 1877's Los Angeles agreement.

Not only is that unlikely; the strike is set to spread north and east very soon. ■

## Wal-Martyrts

Unionizing means job cuts at the world's largest retailer

By Kari Lydersen

With \$5.6 billion a year in profits and thousands of stores mushrooming around the country, Wal-Mart has become notorious for its union-busting tactics. Maurice Miller, a meat cutter at the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Jacksonville, Texas, got a first-hand taste of the company's anti-union vitriol when he and six other meat cutters voted to become members of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) Local 540 on February 17.

Several days after the vote, Wal-Mart gave Miller and thousands of other meat cutters and meat wrappers around the country some surprising news: The company is replacing meat-cutting with prepackaged, case-ready meat at 180 of its Supercenter stores in six states starting in May. Eventually, all 700 Supercenter stores nationwide will make this change. Wal-Mart says this



Starting with meat cutters, the UFCW wants to unionize the 1 million Wal-Mart employees across the country.

switch has been in the works for years, and promises that the meat cutters all will be reassigned to different jobs. "Wal-Mart is going case-ready for one reason," says company spokeswoman Jessica Moser, "it's the highest quality you can provide customers today."

But workers call the timing of the announcement a calculated anti-union move. Miller says workers hadn't heard anything about the switch until the vote—the store even had recently purchased thousands of dollars worth of new meat-cutting equipment. While it's true workers won't lose their jobs, he said, they are worried about switches in their duties, hours and wages.

"This is an intimidation tactic," says UFCW spokeswoman Jill Cashen. "Basically they're trying to frighten thousands of other workers around the country away from unionizing. They're showing them that if you vote to unionize, your department is cut."

Wal-Mart is appealing the Jacksonville vote, arguing that the workers shouldn't be recognized as a distinct bargaining unit. The company also tried to use the impending elimination of meat cutters to quash a union vote at a Palestine, Texas store earlier this spring, but the National Labor Relations Board supported the workers. Wal-Mart has appealed the ruling. "I think what they're doing is ridiculous," says Mary Rogers, a meat wrapper at the Palestine store. "Our department

private meetings, the workers withdrew their cards. Jacksonville, Florida meat-cutters recently attended training at the Ocala store, but were sent home early when the company realized the Ocala workers were thinking about a union. "They heard the Ocala workers were organizing, so they didn't want the Jacksonville workers to be contaminated with union fever," Cashen says.

Wal-Mart's Moser says that while the world's largest retailer has an "open door" policy of nonunionization, the company is not against unions per se. "We're not saying unions aren't right for a lot of other companies," she says, "but our associates [the company's term for employees] tell us they don't need a third party to represent them. The union is using this expansion to case-ready as a way to threaten them. They're telling them ghost stories and making a lot of promises. But the fact is the union can't promise them anything."

Cashen notes that the union has long hoped to organize Wal-Mart's 1 million workers nationwide, and figured the meat cutters would be a good place to start. "The meat cutters are a smaller group with specific issues that are easier to define, so we're starting with them," she says. "Then other workers can see the benefits of union representation, and it could be a domino effect. We intend to reach out and unionize all Wal-Mart workers." ■



# Wanted Man

By David Moberg

**W**hen Luis Alfonso Velasquez walks into a bar in his native Colombia, people who recognize him often leave. The problem isn't Velasquez himself: He's a pleasant 47-year-old man of average stature. It's who might be following him. After all, he is the director of judicial and labor affairs at Colombia's main labor union federation (the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores, or CUT), and Colombia is by far the most dangerous place on earth to take part in trade union activities.

Over the past 15 years, about 3,000 unionists have been killed by gunmen, bombers and other assassins in Colombia, 93 of them in just the past six months. A little more than a year ago, the vice president of CUT was assassinated, and the main suspect was later strangled in jail. Out of all these cases, there have been few arrests and only one conviction, a record that even rank incompetence cannot explain. CUT's president travels in an armored car with three bodyguards. Velasquez has no bodyguard, but says, "I change places where I live constantly."

Yet assassinations are not the only worry of the Colombian labor movement. The drug business has wildly distorted the local economy. The country is in a deep economic depression: GDP dropped by around 5 percent last year. The opening of the economy to global trade and adoption of free-market, neoliberal government policies—partly under pressure from the International Monetary Fund—have devastated many Colombian businesses and left most people scrambling for survival in the informal labor market. The combination of all these trends has slashed union membership.

Velasquez, who recently visited the United States on a trip funded by the AFL-CIO, was a successful organizer and leader in a plastics and rubber industry union during the '80s. But in the '90s, the government pursued policies promulgated by the United States and international financial institutions.

With tariffs and other barriers dropped, cheap imports from Asia wiped out many jobs. "We felt the impact of globalization in a big way," he says.

In tandem, government and business also cut pensions, lengthened the work day, changed fixed salaries into flexible wages and piece-rate pay, and promoted subcontracting and temporary work. On top of that, Velasquez says, "the entire arsenal of repression was unleashed against the labor movement as well."

As a result, Velasquez explains, unions shrank (his old union is little



Colombian military police patrol the streets last September during a nationwide strike to protest budget cuts.

more than a quarter of its former size), collectively bargained contracts are being replaced by employer-dictated "collective pacts," government social protections have shriveled and real incomes have dropped, with three-fourths of Colombian workers in the formal sector earning the legal minimum of \$135 a month. Now about 20 percent of the work force is officially unemployed, and more than half of all workers are in the informal sector, often selling cheap imported goods on the street. The steadiest jobs and unions are concentrated in the public sector, energy and oil production, but even there unions have been attacked or undermined by capital flight. Few global

corporations want to invest in such an unstable environment.

At the same time, the "dirty war" carried out by government security forces and right-wing paramilitaries against guerrilla forces "has had the impact of closing what little democratic space there was in Colombia," Velasquez laments. While the government feels it must deal with the guerrilla forces and the International Monetary Fund, it ignores "the legal, unarmed, popular opposition," he says. "To get President Andres Pastrana to talk, you have to point a gun at him."

Unions have tried to join with other progressive social groups to form political parties, but every single person elected under their last banner—the Patriotic Union—was assassinated. Nevertheless, in April CUT launched a National Social Front of "workers, peasants, Indians, the unemployed and students."

CUT and its allies are critical of the drug trade, the big traffickers and their paramilitary allies, but they also oppose the war on drugs. The \$1.6 billion U.S. aid package, recently passed by the House and pending in the Senate, is overwhelmingly for military hardware, with only about 9 percent of the money designated for alternative development that might wean peasants from coca farming. "We're totally opposed to the \$1.6 billion

Colombia aid plan," Velasquez says. "Instead of sending military aid, which is pouring gas on a fire, better to invest in alternative development and to pay down the foreign debt."

Velasquez holds out hope for a "peaceful, negotiated solution to the conflict." Along with Europe and other countries, he says, the United States could help by serving as a guarantor of any negotiated settlement. Yet peace in Colombia must involve more than an end to the violence. "The conflict in Colombia has to be seen as a class struggle at the same time," he says. "If we talk about real peace, we have to talk about social justice. Peace in an abstract way doesn't exist." ■

# THE IMF: KILL IT OR KEEP IT?

By G. Pascal Zachary

**T**he International Monetary Fund could once dismiss its critics as left-wingers, idealists or even kooks. No longer. The so-called "lender of last resort" for governments the world over, the IMF is widely viewed by conservatives, centrists and progressives as a deeply flawed institution.

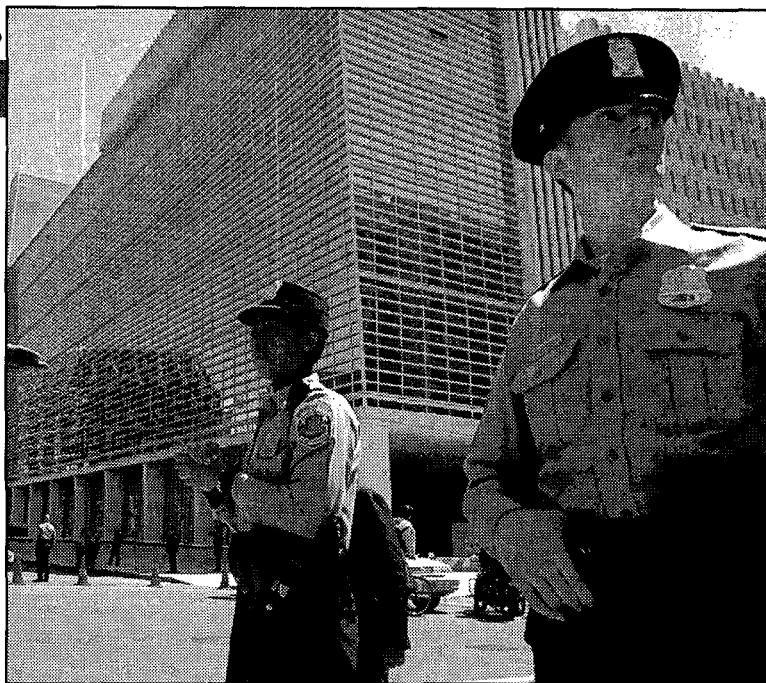
Insular, autocratic, ham-handed and bereft of innovative ideas, the Washington-based IMF is blamed for failing to contain the Asian fiscal crisis of 1997, worsening Russia's economic collapse, and funding the Suharto regime's attack on pro-democracy forces in Indonesia. This year, when it seemed that the IMF's image could sink no lower, the agency engaged in a pathetic squabble over who would become its new president. The choice in April of a drab German bureaucrat underscored the atmosphere of crisis enveloping the agency.

Best known for its infamous "structural adjustment" programs that force poor countries to slash social-safety nets, the IMF now faces the prospect of an adjustment of its own. An influential bloc in Congress wants to sharply scale back the agency, starving it of funds. Others favor more radical approaches, including scrapping the agency altogether. Here's a quick scorecard on the IMF debate and the stakes for progressives.

## Why not kill the IMF?

This has an immediate appeal. The IMF is so compromised that it is hard to believe it wouldn't sabotage any serious reforms. Killing the agency would send a powerful message: not only can the world's poor get even for a change, but badly run international agencies can be eliminated.

A world without the IMF isn't just wishful thinking. Respected analysts of the world economy are starting to question whether the IMF is indeed essential. They argue that the very prospect of an IMF bailout creates a "moral hazard," thus increasing the chances that a government will act in a financially reckless manner. Better to get rid of the IMF, some libertarian economists argue, than to allow national governments to think they are too important to go bankrupt.



SEAN THEW/AFP

The United States guards a set of policies that favors the global money elite.

Some on the left agree that the IMF should go. But rather than using the agency's death as an invitation to experiment with fewer rules on the international economy, they would build a more just and effective system in its place.

## What could replace the IMF?

The world economy does need a lender of last resort. Global capitalism is too unstable to let governments bear the full brunt of the market's whims. It is one thing for investors, customers and lenders to punish a corporation for its mistakes. When Ecuador goes bust, it's not government officials but the country's poorest citizens who suffer most. So any successor to the IMF would have to assume the responsibility of bailing out some countries under certain circumstances.

But this doesn't need to be handled by gray functionaries beholden to the economic establishment. A successor agency should first apologize for the past sins of the IMF. Then it should draw on a wide panel of distinguished citizens, from all walks of life, to establish a set of goals for its technocrats. Finally, its leader should be chosen not from the ranks of finance ministers and academic economists, but from people committed to improvements in human welfare, not just bond ratings.

## Why stop there?

Why not shut down the World Bank, an even more deeply compromised organization, whose rationale for lending to developing countries is even hazier than the IMF's? Both institutions have used loans to reward U.S. political allies. They seem to turn off the money tap in the face not of corrupt governments, but governments who aren't in a position to advance Western interests. Shutting both the IMF and the World Bank would set off a chain-reaction, calling into doubt the necessity of the Asian, African and Latin American development banks, which basically serve regional elites, and for the wiping out of the U.N. Development Program, an agency whose sole purpose seems to be the



employment of people who want to block reforms in their home countries.

A clean slate has advantages. International institutions could be designed with today's needs in mind, not those of 50 years ago. Merely threatening to shutter these agencies could ease reforms by making it clear that the alternative to intransigence is extinction. But whatever the tactical advantages of pushing the line of "Death to the IMF," it is unlikely to be successful since there's nothing that American and global elites fear more than that a free-for-all over future management of the world economy would lead to paralysis or, even worse, the emergence of left-leaning institutions that respond too clearly to popular mandates. So progressives must couple a radical approach with a well-conceived reformist position. In this way, progressives can take advantage of conservative political clout, while conservatives can utilize progressive ideas and ideals.

### How could the IMF be reformed?

Tinkering with the IMF sounds less romantic, but it could achieve lasting results. By rewriting the IMF's charter, reformers could create the foundation for a more politically neutral approach to the international economy. Indeed, they could achieve much of what they would desire from a brand-new agency.

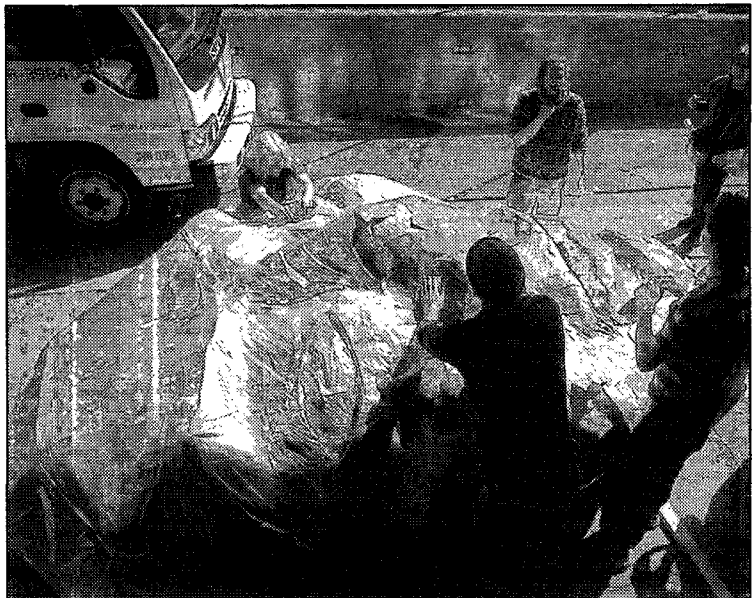
To start with, the IMF could be made more friendly to the public—and not just by cosmetic changes. Leading members of non-governmental organizations could be asked to sit on IMF panels, serve as a watchdog for the agency and offer regular advice. The IMF's chief, while still being subject to political pressures from rich nations, could be required to appear before an international congress prior to his or her selection and to continue to address public concerns throughout his or her tenure. All IMF agreements with individual countries could be made public before taking effect. This alone would vastly alter the agency's landscape. Finally, a ban could be placed on the IMF's notorious practice of conditioning loans on the imposition of cuts in welfare, wages and credit.

### What if nothing changes?

In truth, the IMF probably will weather the current storm; refuse to change more than superficially; and continue to operate, perhaps even a generation from now, much as it does today. The forces of inertia are powerful when it comes to the management of the world economy. It is easy to scare even the most populist politicians by holding out the possibility that democratizing the IMF will cause an even worse economic disaster. Scare tactics, after all, are what the IMF knows best.

Still, there is reason for optimism. Never in its history has the IMF's credibility as an arbiter of economic wisdom been so low. Nor does anyone accept, as many once did, that the IMF is an agent to promote human welfare. It is worth remembering that in its inception the IMF was presented as a means of achieving modest financial safeguards in a world reeling from war. None of its founders ever intended the IMF to become a sort of secret world government with only the flimsiest public oversight. ■

G. Pascal Zachary is the author of *The Global Me: New Cosmopolitans and the Competitive Edge*, to be published in July by *Public Affairs*.



Protesters in Washington want to give the global economy a new face.



## How To Fix the IMF

### First, do no harm

By David Moberg

**G**overnment—as an institution and even as an idea—hasn't fared well in this era of corporate globalization. The prevailing view, especially in elite circles, is either that government has become irrelevant and powerless, swept away in the swirl of the global market, or that it is an odious obstacle to the market and its bounty. Yet it is growing increasingly clear that the world doesn't need more rapid marketization. Instead, it needs more effective, democratic government and a stronger popular political voice, from local communities to global financial institutions.

Ironically, the view that government is bad is often imposed on developing countries by two institutions created by governments, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the latest targets of popular protest against globalization. When countries get into economic difficulties, often as a result of financial market instability (currency swings, short-term capital flight, commodity price plunges or interest rate spurts), the IMF typically has demanded that governments privatize operations, cut budgets (with education and health care the usual victims), eliminate subsidies, open and deregulate all markets and make labor "flexible" (that is, make it easy to fire workers and cut their pay). Everything must be sacrificed to protect government's sacred bond—not with its own citizens, but with international bond holders.

In many developing countries where the IMF prescribes its harsh medicine, governments have been particularly bad—corrupt, ill-managed, inefficient, undemocratic, inequitable and ineffective in their basic tasks. But as the 1997 Asian crisis demonstrated, the IMF prescribed the same treatment for governments that had been doing many things well, especially on issues that typically matter to the IMF—balancing budgets, promoting growth, opening markets. As Russia shows, even a functioning government that doesn't do much well can be economically preferable to virtually no functioning government. Joseph Stiglitz, who recently resigned as the World Bank's chief economist, has argued in criticism of the IMF that markets don't work well without appropriate governmental institutions. In their absence, it can be disastrous to push rapidly for more exposure to global market forces.

The developing world certainly has suffered from corrupt despots, and IMF critics often downplay the extent to which economic and political elites in poor countries have been responsible for poverty and squalor. But from Indonesia to Guatemala, the responsibility for many bad governments also rests with outside forces, both the United States and international financial institutions. No matter how much the powerhouses of global capitalism may criticize corruption in these countries, they have preferred it over even moderately left-wing popular governments.

With the end of the Cold War, there is no longer the "strategic" justification for propping up such governments, concluded a recent congressional advisory commission on international financial institutions chaired by conservative economist Alan Meltzer. But it was not just a Cold War strategy: The United States, often acting through the IMF and World Bank, was clearly setting policies that were designed foremost to protect the interests of Wall Street, turning governments into handmaidens of global corporations and financiers. Now the United States may support limited democratization in countries like Haiti, Korea or Indonesia—but only to gain popular legitimacy for a set of policies that still favors the global money elite.

The overall record of countries under IMF structural adjustment programs—the policies imposed as a condition for loans—has ranged from unimpressive to disastrous, despite some successes in dampening inflation and increasing exports. Even by its own account, roughly 60 percent of World Bank projects have been failures.

One of the biggest problems has been the horrendous burden of debts on many poor countries. Many of these debts are odious—especially when contracted by undemocratic, corrupt rulers—and could legally be repudiated under a precedent established a century ago by the United States, when it canceled Cuba's debt to Spain after the Spanish-American War. The Jubilee 2000 campaign finally has forced the rich nations to acknowledge the need for debt relief. Yet the plans for writing off some of the debt still leave most poor countries saddled with unsustainable debt service charges and untenable conditions.

Governments have been turned into debt collectors for global capital. But the money and its repayment are not as important as enforcing the iron law that capital always come first. Moreover, collecting the debt by dismantling public services and turning everything over to private business is very rarely the best solution to the failures of government.

The key to correcting government failures and creating the conditions for solid development is less a matter of technical economics—like "getting prices right"—than a matter of politics—giving people a voice. In its most recent *Poverty Report*, the U.N. Development Program argues that "effective governance is

often the 'missing link' " in strategies to reduce poverty; countries need help in improving governance, not more economic conditions imposed from outside. Most important, the report states, "The foundation of poverty reduction is self-organization of the poor at the community level. Such self-organization is the best antidote to powerlessness, a central source of poverty."

Poverty programs are unlikely to work, the report continues, if the poor are not empowered, or if

macro-economic policies are anti-poor. Yet the IMF not only imposes anti-poor policies, but also undermines democracy. IMF strategy disempowers the poor, whether it's secretly setting national policies, dismantling the few programs that serve the poor, or undermining unions.

Stiglitz argues development must be viewed as a transformation of society, not just an increase in GDP, and it must spring from within the society. Economic democracy is essential, he said in a January speech in Boston, and "democratic and participatory processes involving labor unions and other social organizations" are needed both to deal with the legitimate interests and anxieties of working people and to make possible a participatory "high road" to economic development.

Pushing for a flexible labor market, Stiglitz said, may be tantamount to telling workers to give up hard won advances in labor standards without any overall public benefit. "By becoming advocates of stronger workers rights and representation at every level—from the workplace ... to the international level—I believe that we can achieve much more than improvements in efficiency," he said. "Labor unions and other genuine forms of popular self-organization are key to democratic economic development."

While IMF officials disdain promoting labor rights as illegitimately "political," they regularly encourage policies that undermine labor rights as simply "economic." The IMF pays no attention to the distribution of income and wealth. Yet several studies show a link between lower levels of income inequality and higher levels of growth in nations around the world. Harvard economist Dani Rodrik has shown a strong correlation between democratic institutions and rates of growth as well. Stiglitz also argues that economic problems increase as inequality of wealth grows, possibly reducing productivity, and union



Unions are key to democratic economic development.

SEAN THEW/AFR



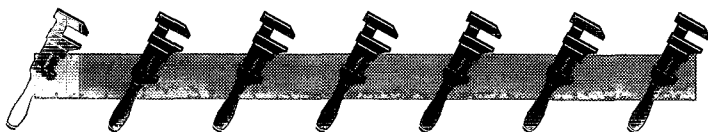
organization can help correct some of those problems. Clearly, the political arguments for democracy, workers rights and effective government form the basis for sound economic policy.

The most important thing that the international financial institutions could do to strengthen government and democratic participation is to stop doing harm: stop acting as enforcers for global capital and stop interfering in the organization of workers, peasants and other citizens in unions, non-governmental organizations and political parties.

Although it is unlikely that the World Bank or IMF will be eliminated, as some protesters demanded at the spring meetings in Washington, there is growing clamor—some of it from conservatives—to drastically scale back the IMF to focus on its original mission of managing short-term currency problems. There is a need, however, for both increased foreign aid and long-term loans to poor countries. That could come from a new organization, possibly funded by receipts from a small tax on currency and other financial transactions, or even a reformed World Bank. The conditions for such assistance should not be privatization and austerity, but recognition of core labor and human rights. Although rich countries can provide poor countries technical assistance in developing effective governmental institutions and a professional corps of civil servants, the real political transformation must come from within the countries themselves. For that to

happen, ordinary people must be able to organize.

The creation of strong forms of economic and political democracy can become the basis for real, sustainable development. This would not preclude foreign investment, but it would mean that when countries bargain with international investors and institutions, workers, poor people, environmentalists and other citizens will have a voice in setting the terms of the new global market. This model of development is likely to produce a more egalitarian society—one that measures wealth, as recent Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen proposes, not just in dollars but in the growth of human capacities of the greatest number of people throughout the world. ■



## Water Fallout

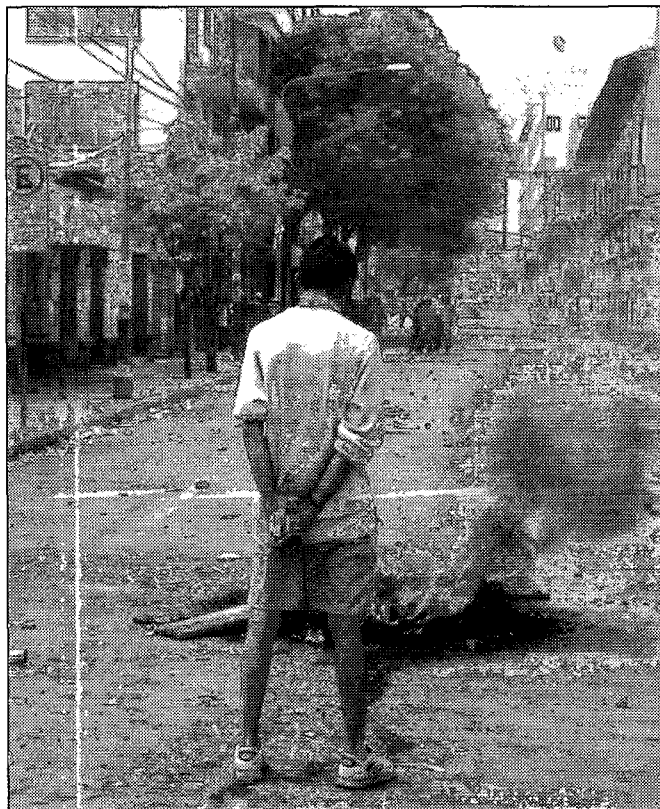
### Bolivians battle globalization

By Jim Shultz

As thousands of people were preparing to march on Washington to protest the unchecked global economy, in Bolivia an enormous uprising of workers, farmers and other ordinary people won a major battle against globalization, kicking the San Francisco-based Bechtel Corporation out of the country.

The roots of the recent uprisings were planted last year when the Bolivian government, under pressure from the World Bank, sold off Cochabamba's public water system to Bechtel subsidiary Aguas Del Tunari (see "Water War Zone," April 17). While the financial details of the deal have been kept secret, Bechtel's interest was clear: to fleece Bolivians of as much of their tiny incomes as quickly as possible. Within weeks of hoisting up their new corporate logo, they hit water users with rate hikes of double and more. Families earning a minimum wage of less than \$100 per month were expected to fork over \$20 or have the tap shut off. For World Bank economists and Bechtel executives, that's lunch money. For Bolivian families, it's food for more than a week.

In January, Cochabamba's residents shut down their city for



TOM KRUSE

To protect corporate interests, Bolivia declared martial law.

four days with general strikes and transportation stoppages. The Bolivian government promised to lower water rates, and the protests ended. But within a few weeks, that pledge was broken. On February 4, thousands attempted to march peacefully in Cochabamba. But President Hugo Banzer—who was Bolivia's Pinochet-style dictator for most of the '70s—returned to his old ways. Banzer called out the police, who engulfed protesters in tear gas for two days, leaving 175 injured and two youths blinded.

The people of Cochabamba didn't back down. In a survey of more than 60,000 residents in March, 90 percent said it was time for Aguas Del Tunari to go and for the water system to be returned to public control. Residents closed down the city again starting on April 4. But once again, the Bolivian government came to Bechtel's rescue. Four days into the demonstrations, the Bolivian government declared martial law. Police arrested protest leaders, taking them from their beds in the middle of the night, shut off radio stations in mid-broadcast, and sent soldiers into the streets. On April 8, the Bolivian military shot 17-year-

old Victor Hugo Daza in the face, killing him. "The blood spilled in Cochabamba carries the fingerprints of Bechtel," says protest leader Oscar Olivera.

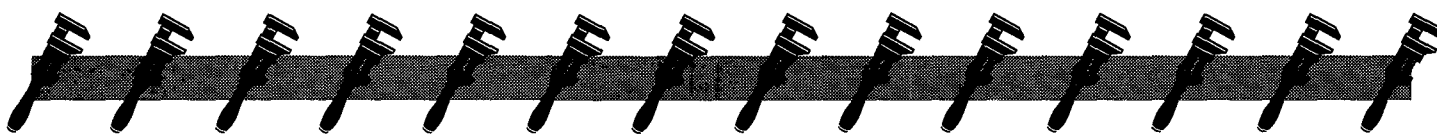
**O**n April 10, the government finally conceded, signing an accord that agreed to every demand the protesters had made. The people of Cochabamba rejoiced at the victory and the city's normal pace of life returned the next day, just as Banzer started cranking up his PR machine. One spokesman referred to the protesters as narcotraffickers. That lie was repeated by naïve reporters and editors worldwide. Meanwhile, Bechtel put out its own spin. "We are also dismayed by the fact that much of the blame is falsely centered on the government's plan to raise water rates in Cochabamba," read a company statement, "when in fact, a number of other water, social and political issues are the root causes of this civil unrest."

It's true that the strength and international attention of Cochabamba's water protests did embolden—and become linked with—other protests around the country, such as marches in the

countryside against a new law ending public control of rural water systems, a police strike in the capital city of La Paz, and complaints about unfinished highways. But the people who marched 70 miles on foot from small towns to join the Cochabamba protest, the thousands who filled the city plaza day after day, and the women who went door to door gathering food donations to cook for the protesters, all clearly demonstrate that the uprising was over Bechtel. The fuse was the rate hikes, and narcotrafficking had about as much to do with it as Elián González. "This is a struggle for justice," says the mayor of a small town, who walked for 12 hours to join the protest, "and for the removal of an international business that, even before offering us more water, had begun to charge us prices that are outrageously high."

In the emerging battle over global economics, the humble people of this easily forgotten country have offered the world a powerful lesson. ■

**Jim Shultz**, executive director of The Democracy Center ([www.democracyctr.org](http://www.democracyctr.org)), lives in Cochabamba.



# ICANN: Secret Government of the Internet?

## The fight over who will control the Web

By Steven Hill

**A**s the planet tiptoes toward experiments in global governance, the World Trade Organization is not the only institution raising concern. Depending on whose description you read, ICANN—the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers—is either an innocuous nonprofit with a narrow technical mandate or the first step in corraling the Internet for commercial and other purposes.

ICANN is a nonprofit corporation that was chartered by the U.S. Commerce Department to oversee a select set of Internet technical management functions previously managed by the federal government. These functions include fostering competition in the domain name registration market (the selling of .com, .net and .org suffixes, which previously had been the exclusive monopoly of Network Solutions) and settling disputes over "cyber-squatting" (the intentional buying of domain names like McDonalds.com for later resale at exorbitant prices).

That all sounds fairly bureaucratic and benign, but there's more—and it has watchdogs like the Center for Democracy and Technology, Common Cause and the Markle Foundation really worked up. To understand their suspicion, it's necessary to know a bit about what's called the "root server," and the critical role ICANN plays in overseeing it. The root server is a high-powered

computer that functions as one of the crossroads of the Internet, through which all requests to view Web pages are routed.

Bizarre as it may seem for a decentralized global network that supposedly "exists nowhere and everywhere," the root server and the various domain servers to

which it points constitute the very heart of the Internet. After all the talk over the past few years about how difficult it will be to regulate the Internet, the domain name system looks like the one place where Internet policy can be enforced.

Whoever controls the root server can decide which other servers all Internet users worldwide will be directed to when they try to view any Web site address in the .com, .net and .org domains. Because they hold the authoritative list of names and addresses, controllers of the root server can require server operators to follow certain conditions, such as requiring them to pay a certain fee, to provide particular kinds of information about the people to whom they have handed out specific names and addresses, or to mandate transmission of files in a specified format. Since ICANN controls the root server, it is technically feasible for this nearly anonymous organization to exercise a kind of life-or-death power over the global network. Eliminate the entry for xyz.com from the .com domain server, and xyz.com vanishes entirely from cyberspace.

This raises important policy questions around issues of privacy, sovereignty and cyber-property that have the potential to go far beyond ICANN's narrow technical mandate. How would you resolve the following?

- One anti-abortion Web site listed the names of doctors performing abortions and crossed them off as they were



assassinated. Another site published the names of alleged British intelligence agents and put their lives and, potentially, British national security, at risk. ICANN has the power to wipe out these sites. Should it do so?

- There's a Web site called MartinLutherKing.org, which specializes in slandering the slain civil rights leader. Is that free speech or a violation of the "trademark," not to mention the legacy, of Martin Luther King?
- How about a Web site of anonymous Chinese dissidents, broadcasting their message to the world? How should ICANN balance anonymity on the Web—a key element of political freedom—with the right to know who is behind a domain name?
- Should ICANN have acted in the case of B92, the courageous and respected independent radio station in Belgrade that had its online identity—b92.net—taken over and used by Slobodan Milosevic?
- Should Internet users under the jurisdiction of the Palestine Authority be eligible for an e-mail address ending with .pa, just as users in the United Kingdom have e-mail addresses ending with .uk? How about the Kurds? Who should decide?

As Zoë Baird of the Markle Foundation has pointed out, in many instances acting or not acting will have similar repercussions. ICANN must decide what falls within its jurisdiction. Yet, according to the *New York Times*, ICANN's policy-making process so far has been dominated largely by technical and commercial interests.

Specifically, the first nine ICANN board members (out of 19) were privately selected last fall for seats reserved for "support organizations" representing three different groups: Internet service providers, domain name registration companies and intellectual property interests concerned about protecting their brands online. The first issues the board has dealt with concern cyber-property, domain name competition and other commercial interests. It will be later this year before ICANN finally gets around to selecting the other half of the board from a broader worldwide constituency. But by then the overall tone may have been set.

Not surprisingly, watchdog groups have proposed that ICANN's international board of directors should not only be publicly elected, but also subject to public meetings and disclosure. The Markle Foundation has initiated an Internet Governance Project that will work to make ICANN more open and accountable. This project funded a thorough study of ICANN by Common Cause and the Center for Democracy Technology, which issued a report criticizing many aspects of ICANN's procedures—including its proposal to use indirect elections, its lack of a nomination process, its use of "winner-take-all" rather than proportional representation election methods, and its failure to establish an independent election monitor.

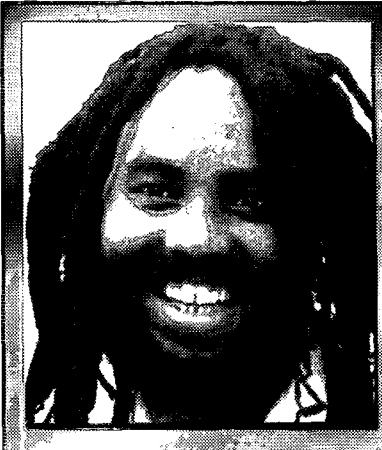
At a March meeting in Cairo, Egypt, ICANN accepted some of these criticisms, agreeing to direct elections for half of its board members. But crucial details still remain to be worked out. Some within ICANN are embracing this call

for elected representation and accountability, while others are resisting. Following the March meeting, Internet pioneer Vincent Cerf, an ICANN board member who now works for MCI Worldcom, expressed skepticism, saying, "I'm not sure how [the elected-at-large body] helps ICANN do its job." Board member Hans Kraaijenbrink of the European Telecommunications Network Operators Association in Brussels went further, calling the watchdog report "a study we didn't ask for."

Not too many people are aware of this ICANN business, and that's just fine with certain elements within ICANN. Don't let it stay that way. To find out more information, visit the Web sites of the Center for Democracy and Technology ([www.cdt.org/dns](http://www.cdt.org/dns)) or ICANN Watch ([www.icannwatch.org](http://www.icannwatch.org)). Any Internet user can become a member of ICANN for free (and vote in a future election) by registering at [www.icann.org](http://www.icann.org) (so far ICANN has received more than 11,000 membership applications). And ICANN has created an Internet forum where people can post their opinions at [www.icann.org/feedback.html](http://www.icann.org/feedback.html) or e-mail them to [comments@icann.org](mailto:comments@icann.org).

Let them know what you think, and spread the word. Someday we may look back and realize that this moment was critical in deciding who would control this new form of global communication. ■

Steven Hill is the western regional director of the Center for Voting and Democracy ([www.fairvote.org](http://www.fairvote.org)). He is the co-author of *Reflecting All of Us* (Beacon Press).



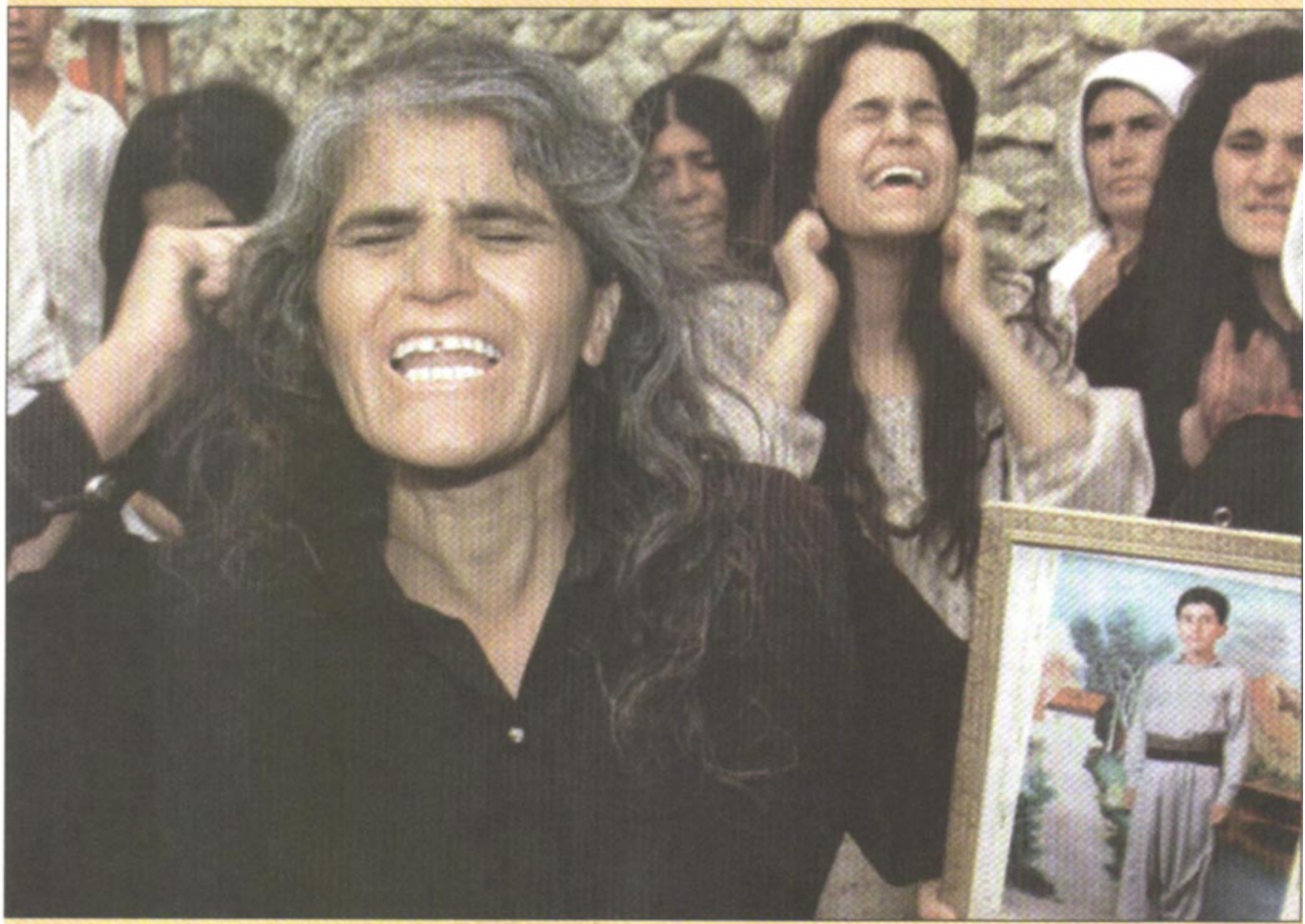
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# COLLATERAL DAMAGE

## TEN YEARS OF SANCTIONS IN IRAQ



BY JOHN PILGER

**T**he memories of my journey to Iraq last fall are almost surreal. Beside the road to Baghdad from Jordan lay two bodies: old men in suits, their arms stiffly beside them. A taxi rested upside-down beside them. The men had been walking along the road, each with his meager belongings, which were now scattered among the thornbushes. The taxi's brakes had apparently failed, and it had cut them down. Local people came out of the swirling dust and stood beside the bodies: for them, on this, the only road in and out of Iraq, it was a common event.

The road on the Jordan side of the border is one of the most dangerous on earth. It was never meant as an artery, yet it now carries most of Iraq's permissible trade and traffic to the outside world. Two narrow single lanes are dominated by oil tankers, moving in an endless convoy; cars and overladen buses and vans dart in and out in a kind of *danse macabre*. The inevitable carnage provides a gruesome road-

side tableau of burnt-out tankers, a bus crushed like a tin can, an official U.N. Mercedes on its side, its once-privileged occupants dead.

Of course, brakes fail on rickety taxis everywhere, but the odds against survival here are shortened to zero. Parts for the older models are now nonexistent, and drivers go through the night and day with little sleep. With the Iraqi dinar worth virtually nothing, they must go back and forth, from Baghdad to Amman, Amman to Baghdad, as frequently and as quickly as possible, just to make enough to live. And when they and their passengers are killed or maimed, they, too, become victims of the most ruthless economic embargo of our time.

The inhumanity and criminal vindictiveness of the "sanctions" struck me one afternoon in Baghdad, in the studio of the great Iraqi sculptor Mohamed Ghani. His latest work is a three-meter figure of a woman, her breasts dry of milk, a child pleading with her for food, the small, frail body merged



into her legs. Her face is dark and ill-defined, "a nightmare of sadness and confusion," as he describes it. She is waiting in a line at a closed door. The line is recognizable from every hospital I visited; it is always the same, stretching from the dispensary into the heat outside as people wait for the life-giving drugs that are allowed into Iraq only when the U.N. sanctions committee feels like it: rather, when the Clinton administration and its sidekick, the Blair government, feel like it. "The longer we can fool around in the [Security] council and keep things static, the better," an American official boasted to the *Washington Post*, explaining Washington's general strategy toward Iraq.

While I was in Iraq, the list of "holds" on humanitarian supplies included 18 on medical equipment, such as heart-and-lung machines. Along with water pumps, agricultural supplies, safety and fire-fighting equipment, these were "suspected dual use": Saddam Hussein might also make weapons of mass destruction from wheelbarrows, which were on the list. So was detergent. In hospitals and hotels, there is the inescapable, sickly stench of gasoline, which is used to clean the floors, because detergent is "on hold."

While I was in Iraq, Kofi Annan, normally the most compliant of U.N. secretary-generals, complained to the Security Council about "holds" amounting to \$700 million. These included food, supplies and equipment that might restore the power grid, the water-treatment plants and the telephones.

The deliberate bombing of the civilian infrastructure in 1991 returned Iraq, a modern state, to "a pre-industrial age." The strategy was: bomb now, die later. It is the new style of "humanitarian war." The statistics of those who have since died are breathtaking; for this reason, no doubt, they have been consigned to media oblivion.

In May 1996, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was asked on the CBS program *60 Minutes* if the death of more than half a million children was a price worth paying. "We think the price is worth it," she replied.

**A**fter returning from Iraq, I flew to Washington and interviewed State Department spokesman James Rubin. He claimed that Albright's words on *60 Minutes* were taken out of context. I had with me the transcript of the program; her statement was clear, and I offered him a copy. "In making policy," he said, "one has

to choose between two bad choices ... and unfortunately the effect of sanctions has been more than we would have hoped." He referred me to the "real world" where "real choices have to be made." In mitigation, he added, "Our sense is that, prior to sanctions, there was serious poverty and health problems in Iraq." The clear implication was that the children would have died anyway.

The opposite is of course true. As UNICEF has reported, Iraq in 1990 had one of the healthiest and best-educated populations in the world; its child mortality rate was one of the lowest. Today, it is among the highest on earth. UNICEF has reported that more than 5,000 children under five die on average every month in Iraq, in part because of "the prolonged measures imposed by the Security Council and the effects of the [Persian Gulf] war" on the population. Today, foreign visitors cannot escape the sight of children dying.

Doctor after doctor wrote in my notebook the names of vital drugs and equipment they needed. These arrive only sporadically and after a long journey through the arcane bureaucracy of the sanctions committee in New York. Doctors are denied even blood bags, even drugs as basic as those that defeat preventable dysentery and preventable tuberculosis, even morphine that allows the terminally ill to die with dignity. "It's like torture," said Dr. Jawad Al-Ali, a cancer specialist. "Maybe we can treat patients 20 percent of the time, but I think that's almost worse than no treatment at all, because it gives people hope, and for many, there is none."

The words of the playwright Arthur Miller come to mind. "Few of us," he wrote, "can easily surrender our belief that society must somehow make sense. The thought that the state has lost its mind and is punishing so many innocent people is intolerable. And so the evidence has to be internally denied."

At the United Nations in New York, this internal denial is as surreal as anything I saw in Iraq. There is a fine, subsidized buffet restaurant not far from where you can read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with its rights to liberty and, above all, life. I



ANTHONY ARNONE

**The U.S. strategy was: bomb now, die later. It is the new style of "humanitarian war."**

met Kofi Annan and asked him, "As secretary-general of the United Nations, which is imposing the sanctions on Iraq, what do you say to the parents of the children who are dying?"

He replied that the Security Council was considering "smart sanctions." These will "target the leaders," rather than act as "a blunt instrument that impacts on children." He had no details, and none have been forthcoming since, apart from a resolution that offered Iraq a partial suspension of sanctions in return for further weapons inspections, which Saddam Hussein turned down, predictably. Meanwhile, the "blunt instrument ... impacts on children" at the rate of around 150 deaths every day.

Peter van Walsum is the Netherlands' ambassador to the United Nations and the current chair of the sanctions committee of the Security Council. What struck me about this diplomat with life-and-death powers over millions of people half a world away was that, like James Rubin, he seemed to associate Iraq, the civilized society, with Saddam Hussein, the murderer, as if they were one and the same. He also seemed to believe in holding innocent people hostage to the compliance of a dictator over whom they have no control. Such moral and intellectual contortion is common in United Nations Plaza, the State Department and the Foreign Office in London as a justification for the "genocidal destruction of a nation," as Denis Halliday described the effects of sanctions after he resigned in protest as the U.N. humanitarian coordinator in Baghdad.

I had the following conversation with van Walsum:

*Why should the civilian population, innocent people, be punished for Saddam's crimes?*

It's a difficult problem. You should realize that sanctions are one of the curative measures that the Security Council has at its disposal ... and obviously they hurt. They are like a military measure.

*But who do they hurt?*

Well, this, of course, is the problem ... but with military action, too, you have the eternal problem of collateral damage.

*So an entire nation is collateral damage? Is that correct?*

No, I am saying that sanctions have [similar] effects. ... I ... you see ... you understand, we have to study this further.

*Do you believe that people have human rights no matter where they live and under what system?*

Yes.

*Doesn't that mean that the sanctions you are imposing are violating the human rights of millions of people?*

It's also documented the Iraqi regime has committed very serious human rights breaches. ...

*There is no doubt about that. But what's the difference in principle between human rights violations committed by the regime and those caused by your committee?*

It's a very complex issue, Mr. Pilger.

*What do you say to those who describe sanctions that have caused so many deaths as a "weapon of mass destruction," as lethal as chemical weapons?*

## UNDER SIEGE

BY ANTHONY ARNOVE

**W**hen Hans von Sponeck announced in February that he was resigning as coordinator of the U.N. humanitarian program in Iraq effective March 31, State Department spokesman James Rubin suggested that the 36-year U.N. veteran was unsuitable for the position and had acted "beyond the range of his competence or his authority" in speaking out on the limitations of the oil-for-food program. "His job is to work on behalf of Iraqi people and not the regime," Rubin charged.

To defend sanctions in the face of growing awareness of their devastating toll on millions of Iraqis, the State Department has sought to discredit von Sponeck. The process started last fall, when pro-sanctions forces in Britain and the United States said von Sponeck had come under the influence of his predecessor in Iraq, Denis Halliday, a vocal opponent of sanctions who resigned in protest in September 1998, after 34 years at the United Nations.

But, as von Sponeck told *In These Times* in a recent interview in Baghdad, the oil-for-food program created by U.N. Security Council



Hans von Sponeck

United Nations, of the \$8.2 billion made available under the oil-for-food program in its last three phases, items

Resolution 986 is fundamentally inadequate and has failed to meet its stated objective. Not enough food or medicine is reaching ordinary Iraqis. "The net of empirical evidence is increasingly dense," he says. "We are just talking with our hearts, but we are also talking with our minds. We can back up what we are saying."

The U.S. and British representatives on the sanctions committee in New York, which decides what Iraq can and cannot import, replace holds on things desperately needed in Iraq because they are considered "dual use" items that could have military applications. The restrictions cover items such as water pumps, ambulances and essential parts for supplying electricity. According to figures compiled by the



I don't think that's a fair comparison.

*Aren't the deaths of half a million children mass destruction?*

I don't think you can use that argument to convince me.

... It is about the invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

*Let's say the Netherlands was taken over by a Dutch Saddam Hussein, and sanctions were imposed, and the children of Holland started to die like flies. How would you feel about that?*

I don't think that's a very fair question. ... We are talking about a situation which was caused by a government that overran its neighbor, and has weapons of mass destruction.

*Then why aren't there sanctions on Israel [which] occupies much of Palestine and attacks Lebanon almost every day of the week? Why aren't there sanctions on Turkey, which has displaced 3 million Kurds and caused the deaths of 30,000 Kurds?*


Well, there are many countries that do things that we are not happy with. We can't be everywhere. I repeat, it's complex.

*How much power does the United States exercise over your committee?*

We operate by consensus.

*And what if the Americans object?*

We don't operate.

 On my last night in Iraq, I went to the Rabat Hall in the center of Baghdad to watch the Iraqi National Orchestra rehearse. I had wanted to meet Mohammed Amin Ezzat, the conductor, whose personal tragedy epitomizes the punishment of his people. Because the power supply is so

worth nearly \$1.8 billion—or 20 percent of the total—have been placed on hold. “Nobody can say that is an insignificant amount,” von Sponeck says. “And even that amount is not a good guide. You can have \$200,000 worth of items on hold that prevent \$200 million worth of equipment from becoming useful. We have many examples of that.”

In particular, he says, “water, sanitation, oil and electricity are suffering.” Materials for repairing Iraq’s water infrastructure have been kept out, leading to a sharp increase in water-borne diseases. “A major killer of children [in Iraq] is diarrhea,” von Sponeck points out, noting that this is a new development since sanctions were imposed in 1990. He also attributes “to a very large extent to sanctions” the steep increase in mortality of children under five.

Another profound inadequacy he cites is the lack of funding for education under the oil-for-food program: “Education ... has never been more than 4 percent of the oil-for-food revenue. That’s nothing. Juxtapose that to the allocation of the education budget before the embargo. In 1989, \$2.1 billion ... was available for education. Now, during the embargo—in 1999, I calculated it was \$226 million.”

The Iraqi people are not only suffering from sanctions, however. They also face ongoing danger in areas targeted for steady bombing by British and American jets. Von Sponeck, whose team in Iraq has attempted to systematically document the impact of these

intermittent, Iraqis have been forced to use cheap kerosene lamps for lighting, heating and cooking; and these frequently explode. This is what happened to Ezzat’s wife, Jenan, who was engulfed in flames. “It was devastating,” he said, “because I saw my wife burn completely before my eyes. I threw myself on her in order to extinguish the flames, but it was no use. She died. I sometimes wish I had died with her.”

He stood on his conductor’s podium, his badly burned left arm unmoving, the fingers stuck together. The orchestra was rehearsing Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker Suite*, and there was a strange discord. Reeds were missing from clarinets and strings from violins. “We can’t get them from abroad,” he said. “Someone has decreed they are not allowed.” The musical scores are ragged, like ancient parchment. They cannot get paper. Only two members of the original orchestra are left; the rest have gone abroad. “You cannot blame them,” he said. “The suffering in our country is too great. But why has it not been stopped? That is the question for all civilized people to ask.” ■

John Pilger is a documentary filmmaker, journalist and author. A regular contributor to the *Guardian* and the *New Statesman*, he is the author of *Hidden Agendas* (New Press), *A Secret Country* (Knopf) and *Distant Voices* (Vintage). This article is taken from *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War* (South End Press).

bombings, including civilian casualties, rejects the charge that he is simply putting a U.N. stamp on Iraqi propaganda. Of the attacks that his office has documented from January 1 to September 15, 1999, he says, “26 out of 99 times, our people were there.”

Von Sponeck, who plans to speak on these concerns in the United States, is encouraged by a recent report from the British Parliament’s Select Committee on International Development, which concluded that “however carefully exemptions are planned, the fact is that comprehensive economic sanctions only further concentrate power in the hands of the ruling elite.” The report also suggests the United Nations “will lose credibility if it advocates the rights of the poor,” while implementing comprehensive sanctions that cause widespread suffering.

Von Sponeck has called on his successor, Tun Myat of Burma, to “advise the secretary-general very, very straightforwardly” about conditions in Iraq as it approaches its tenth year under sanctions.

For activists in the United States, von Sponeck’s resignation presents an opportunity to push for the lifting of sanctions. The Iraqi people should not have to wait for yet another U.N. official to resign. ■

Anthony Arnove is editor of *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War* (South End Press). He recently traveled to Iraq with members of *Voices in the Wilderness* and the *Fellowship of Reconciliation*.



# The Big Payback

## African-Americans renew the call for reparations

By Salim Muwakkil

**A**etna, the largest life and health insurer in the nation, helped build the foundation of its current prosperity by insuring slaveowners' human chattel. So discovered Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, a 34-year-old New York attorney whose research has revealed a number of unsavory corporate links to slavery.

When she informed Aetna about her research, officials initially acknowledged the company's role, apologized and hinted it might offer some form of restitution. "We express our deep regret over any participation at all in this deplorable practice [of insuring slaves]," Aetna spokesman Fred Laberge told Reuters. "We want to make clear that we take this matter very seriously, and we are actively engaged in determining what actions might be taken."

But after mulling over that statement and the monumental implications of such an acknowledgment, Aetna quickly changed

its tune: "We have concluded that, beyond our apology, no further actions are required."

Farmer-Paellmann says that's not good enough. "Aetna has a moral obligation to apologize and share that unjust enrichment with the Africans they helped maintain in slavery," she insists.

**F**armer-Paellmann is not alone in that view. She is one of a slew of activists and researchers bringing the debate over slavery reparations into the mainstream. She notes that there is little difference between her efforts to unearth the unjust enrichment accrued from slavery and the efforts of investigators seeking restitution on behalf of victims of Nazi barbarity.

When Germany and Israel signed the Luxembourg Agreement in 1952, it set the stage for a unique form of legislation known as *Wiedergutmachung* ("to make good again"). The legislation obligated Germany to pay reparations to individual Holocaust survivors as well as to the state of Israel for crimes committed by Third Reich against Jewish people in general. The principle underlying *Wiedergutmachung* was that a state that systematically has victimized an entire group of people has a moral obligation to compensate that group materially on the same basis. What's more, the German legislation accepted ongoing responsibility for the echoing, intergenerational effects of Nazi persecution.

This same logic has been used in the United States. In 1988, the U.S. government granted federal reparation payments not only to



Japanese-Americans who had been sent to internment camps in World War II, but also to their next of kin. The law reinforced the notion that injuries suffered as a result of minority status must be compensated on the same basis—a clear precedent for reparations for African-Americans.

In 1994, Florida allocated \$2 million to be paid to descendants of a deadly 1923 race riot in the town of Rosewood. Similarly, last February an official commission in Oklahoma recommended that the state pay reparations to survivors of a 1921 race riot in which a white mob decimated a black section of Tulsa, killing hundreds and injuring thousands. Rosewood and Tulsa are just two of many race riots that erupted in the United States after Reconstruction. Oklahoma state Rep. Don Ross, a prime mover of the legislation that created the Tulsa commission, argues that documenting those other riots would help build the strongest possible argument for reparations. Ross sees his state's action as only the first step in a much larger process. "Along with what happened earlier in Florida," he says, "this should open the door for a nationwide dialogue about the savagery this nation has bestowed on African-Americans."

Ross has hit the road, spreading the word to other legislators. Some have heeded his call. In Chicago, for example, Alderman Dorothy Tillman has proposed a resolution for hearings on the issue of reparations, citing the notorious 1919 Red Summer in Chicago and other incidents throughout Illinois. Similar measures already have passed in cities in Michigan, Ohio, Texas and Louisiana. And Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) has been introducing legislation since 1989 calling for the establishment of a national commission to study the effects of slavery and consider whether reparations would be an appropriate remedy. Although the bill repeatedly has been ignored both by his congressional peers and black leadership, the growing debate about reparations is fueling new interest in his efforts.

At the same time, Harvard Law School Professor Charles J. Ogletree has revealed that members of his university's vaunted "dream team" of black intellectuals also will begin researching the viability of reparations legislation. "It's important because a lot of nations worldwide are looking back on a lot of harm that has been done, and they have decided that it's time to do something about that harm," Ogletree told the *Harvard Crimson*. He will join fellow law Professor Christopher F. Edley and humanities Professor Henry Louis Gates, who also heads the Afro-American Studies Department, in the initial effort to research and explicate the reparations issue.

The entry of such prominent black intellectuals into the reparations debate is significant for many reasons. In the black community, the issue of reparations largely has been an issue associated with the more radical fringe of black protest and traditionally has attracted little interest among the major activist organizations. In the '20s, the main black group advocating reparations was Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association; in more recent times, the cause has been championed by the Nation of Islam and the Republic of New Africa—groups with mostly lower- and working-class constituents. When respected members of the black intellectual class begin to traffic in ideas popularized by the grassroots, it represents a significant change. Academic interest also legitimizes the issue for many whites who had rejected the notion out of hand as either too complicated or too controversial.

Bursting on the scene in the midst of these other developments, Randall Robinson's book *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks* has added considerable fuel to the public conversation on reparations. "A debt once created exists until it is paid," says Robinson, a longtime human rights activist. "Ignoring it does not make the debt disappear."

Few reparations advocates are talking about monetary awards to individual descendants of enslaved Africans, but rather they are proposing that compensation be made through the allocation of resources that invest in human and business capital—education, training and development. The inequities set in motion by the history of slavery and the Jim Crow apartheid that followed have been reinforced by a society that presumed black inferiority and still has a problem with providing African-Americans equal access to goods and services. If Americans remain ignorant of slavery's social and economic legacy, they are unlikely ever to get at the root of those inequities. If nothing else, the discussion over reparations will help alleviate that ignorance. □

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# The Culture Vultures

By Laura Brahm

**A**re you now, or have you ever been, a dupe of the CIA? In the aftermath of the revelations in Frances Stonor Saunders' new book, *The Cultural Cold War*, this is the ques-

**The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters**  
By Frances Stonor Saunders  
The New Press  
509 pages, \$29.95

tion readers may now wonder about the great artists, writers and musicians of the 20th century. While the CIA's aggressive attempts at political manipulation at home and abroad during the Cold War are old news, Saunders makes that Strangelovian era even stranger, by presenting definitive evidence that the CIA not only infiltrated but ran some of the most respected and influential modern cultural institutions, publications and artistic movements.

It all started in 1947. Among the ruins of impoverished, bombed-out Berlin, "an unnaturally elaborate cultural life was dragged to its feet by the occupying powers as they vied with each other to score propaganda points," Saunders writes. The Russians staged a grand opera; the United States decided it should too. The Soviets opened a "House of Culture" on Berlin's main drag to display its cultural superiority; the Americans responded by instituting the Amerika-Häuser. A cultural arms race was born. The task of dispelling the overseas reputation of America as "culturally barren, a nation of gum-chewing, Chevy-driving, Dupont-sheathed philistines" became as pressing as demonstrating its military strength. Europe was flooded with "appropriate" American music, plays, books and art in a kind of "reverse *Entartekunst*."

1947 also marked the birth of the CIA, whose mission dovetailed nicely with that of the burgeoning cultural Cold War. Although the CIA's violent and misguided interventions into other nations' affairs later gave it the reputation for being staffed by brutish "ugly Americans," Saunders reminds us that the agency was much more genteel: "The dominant early influence was the 'aristocracy' of the eastern seaboard and the Ivy League, a *Bruderbund* of Anglophile sophisticates who found powerful justification for their actions in the traditions of the Enlightenment and the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence."



Irving Kristol, secret agent man.

These gentleman soldiers of the nascent Cold War soon decided that the most effective strategy was to prevent their fellow elites from becoming fellow travelers. The real issue, in the words of one anti-Stalinist firebrand, was "to win the educated and cultured classes—which, in the long run, provide moral and political leadership in the community." With inspiration and assistance from ex-Communist Arthur Koestler, the agency targeted the intelligentsia of the "Non-Communist Left"—with or without their knowing it—to act as the vanguard of American values.

Taking its cue from the Truman doctrine and the Marshall Plan—and siphoning off large amounts of the latter's funds—the CIA sponsored rapidly multiplying cultural programs and projects. One of its first big-budget productions was a front organization, the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Its objectives were twofold: to combat the perception of American cultural inferiority and to advance American foreign policy goals, namely a unified Europe. The group handed out literary prizes, published magazines, held arts festivals. Its supporters and staff included Ignazio Silone, Isaiah Berlin, Raymond Aron, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Irving Kristol and Stephen Spender. It promoted works and appearances by, to name just a few, William Faulkner, Claude Debussy, Czeslaw Milosz, Carson McCullers and Leontyne Price.

Another of the big guns in the cultural Cold War was the Museum of Modern Art in New York, whose board and administration were larded with figures tied to the CIA. MoMA produced several lavish exhibitions, which toured Europe in the '50s, championing modern American art (as well as American free enterprise). Collaboration with the directors of major European museums gave MoMA (and the CIA) "the breadth and scope to influence aesthetic tastes across Europe."

In 1950 the CIA's budget for "psychological warfare" was \$34 million; over the next two years that figure quadrupled. The CIA poured so much money into its cultural operations that it needed a plethora of "friends"—foundations, corporations, individuals who served as fronts—to cover the funds' origins. The most convenient way to launder funds was through philanthropic organizations; legitimate foundations such as Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie provided "the best and most plausible" cover. "If the other side can use ideas that are camouflaged as being local rather than Soviet supported or stimulated, then we ought to be able to use ideas



camouflaged as local ideas," declared Tom Braden, head of the CIA division that provided an institutional base for programs such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and who, like most of his colleagues, seemed to have forgotten he was on the side of freedom and democracy. Saunders' book is chock-full of this brand of doublethink. "If deceit needed to be used to promote the truth," she writes, "then so be it. It was what Koestler called 'fighting against a total lie in the name of a half-truth.'"

The CIA not only had to hide its adventures in cultural programming from the left-leaning intelligentsia, but from the American right. Officials such as Rep. George Dondero publicly denounced modern art as "communistic" and "part of a worldwide conspiracy to weaken American resolve." Another critic claimed, "If you know how to read them, modern paintings will disclose the weak spots in U.S. fortifications, and such crucial constructions as Boulder Dam." In 1952, the agency's doings came to the attention of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, after he discovered it had "granted large subsidies to pro-Communist organizations." Only when CIA director Allen Dulles threatened to quit did Eisenhower act to bring McCarthy under control.

Yet domestic philistinism ultimately did little to faze the CIA. Even if the artists they promoted were commies and homosexuals, the agency didn't care. The important thing was that modern art—in particular, abstract expressionism—as the antithesis of Soviet realism, made an ideal weapon of cultural warfare. As agency man Donald Jameson admits, "Most of [the artists] were people who had very little respect for the government in particular and certainly none for the CIA. If you had to use people who considered themselves one way or another closer to Moscow than to Washington, well, so much the better perhaps."

And how much did the artists know about their patrons? Jameson explains that the money always went through two or three fronts, "so that there wouldn't be any question of having to clear Jackson Pollock, for example, or do anything that would involve these people in the organization—they'd just be added at the end of the line." Yet not all beneficiaries of the CIA's largesse were so innocent. Saunders is particularly dis-

missive of the shock and dismay voiced by the *Partisan Review* crowd after it became public that they'd been the object of the CIA's generosity. William Phillips, the publication's co-editor, had served as the cultural secretary of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, another CIA front. In the '50s, when *Partisan Review* was having financial difficulties, the CIA helped bail it out. But in 1967, Phillips drafted the *Partisan Review's* "Statement on the CIA," which was signed by many of its editors and contributors, declaring the group's staunch opposition to covert

**Did the *Partisan Review* crowd know who paid the bills? "Of course they knew," said one CIA official.**

CIA funding of their journal. When the document was shown to Tom Braden, "he laughed out loud," Saunders says. "Of course they knew," Braden said.

**A**n independent film producer and a fiction writer, Saunders brings to this eerie, comic tale the literary and cinematic sensibility it deserves. She has a keen eye for small but surreal details: To a brief mention of one CIA staff member, Saunders adds, "Physically ugly, he taunted other men with his homosexuality by tweaking their nipples at staff meetings." But the torrent of names, titles, programs, organizations and acronyms Saunders unleashes can become oppressive. More guidance from the author in connecting the historical and political dots—or at least a glossary of the acronyms and names—would have been helpful. Still, Saunders' thorough battery of facts and names is impressive, and provides a bracing portrait of the corruption rife in the Cold War cultural world.

Why, then, doesn't this book make me want to burn my MoMA membership card? Its impact is strangely less than the sum of its parts, possibly because *The Cultural Cold War* is about the relationship between art and the state, yet the relationship between aesthetics and poli-

tics is never addressed. The issue of the CIA's hypocrisy in using profoundly undemocratic means to promote democracy seems clear-cut; the issue of how this affected the art is anything but. The book is in some ways too literal; the CIA's belief that art could function as propaganda is taken at face value. Saunders, like the central intelligence aesthetes, never asks whether it's even possible to wield art as a blunt instrument of foreign policy.

Indeed, it could be argued that the CIA's championing of modern art, literature and music came back to haunt it. Stalin hated abstract expressionism, so the agency figured that any enemy of the Soviet Union was our friend. But in no small way, that same modern art influenced and inspired the aesthetic and political revolts of the '60s, and fueled rebellion against the very establishment the CIA sought to uphold. Surely those connoisseurs at the agency never intended modern art to be that liberatory. And the high culture championed by the CIA not only failed to win the Cold War, but it was dreaded low culture that triumphed. The global spread of TV has done more to advance American foreign policy interests than the bumbling dilettantes at the CIA ever did.

The CIA's faith in high culture now seems almost quaint. "There is a perverse way of looking at this question, which is to say that the CIA took art very seriously," says art critic Philip Dodd. "The great thing about politicians when they get involved in art is it *means* something to them, whether it's the Fascists or the Soviets or the American CIA. So there may be a really perverse argument that says the CIA were the best art critics in America in the '50s because they saw work that actually should have been antipathetic to them—made by old lefties, coming out of European surrealism—and they saw the potential power in that kind of art and ran with it. You couldn't say that of many of the art critics of the time."

Perhaps, then, we might look upon that era with a degree of nostalgia. The CIA culture vultures are now long gone, but is art any better for it? In the current post-NEA climate, we have yet to experience an aesthetic "peace dividend." ■

Laura Brahm edits and writes for the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, but is not a CIA puppet.

# Left in the Dust

By Ted Kleine

**D**oes Mr. Clean really have a place in history alongside Galileo and Pasteur? He does in Joseph A. Amato's epic essay, *Dust: A History of the Small & the Invisible*, which insists that a society's level of civilization can be measured by the glow on its kitchen floors.

In the Middle Ages, centuries before Proctor met Gamble, "men and women were intimate with dust in ways beyond contemporary imagination." Dust rose from dirt roads and rimed hair and skin, marking peasants as a grubby, dark-complexioned race. As soot, it blackened the walls of huts. People were even intimate in dust: "All over the world, people of times past fell asleep and woke up in dusty beds."

To be covered with dust was to be close to the earth, an association that has never helped anyone's social standing. "Filthy" and "dirty" became synonyms for immorality, and "rising from the muck and mire" meant advancement in the world. The upper classes invented complicated manners to separate themselves from "rustics" who wiped snot on their sleeves.

Dirt and dust were shunned partly because they smelled so putrid, but also because even the ancients had a sense that they harbored disease. The discovery and defeat of viruses, germs and bacteria was the number-one benefit of the world's getting tough on grime. Until the 17th century, dust "was an omnipresent boundary ... between the visible and the invisible." But then came the microscope, and scientists could map the anatomy of the ant and study the lives of single-celled organisms.

Lazzaro Spallanzani used this new window to the miniverse to prove that even the tiniest creatures reproduced, a revelation to a world that assumed flies

were spontaneously generated by rotting meat. "Spallanzani identified his discovery of the mysterious world of microbes with Christopher Columbus'

**Dust: A History of the Small & the Invisible**  
By Joseph A. Amato  
University of California Press  
250 pages, \$22.50

discovery of the New World," Amato writes. The work of Spallanzani and his fellow micronauts was part of the same impulse that drove Columbus: "In all directions European civilization showed itself on occupying and controlling

produced brooms, brushes, shovels, feather dusters, scouring pads, soaps, and caustic sodas. ... For the home, there appeared the Bissell carpet sweeper and vacuum cleaner. ... For yards, lawns and streets, there were mowers and hoses. ... The mass manufacture of clothing enhanced personal cleanliness and fastidiousness."

By the mid-20th century, thanks to lemon Pledge and Spic & Span, dust had been swept away from domestic life, although it still served its old purpose as a social marker. Amato, who grew up in Detroit in the '40s, remembers that "each blue-collar worker—foundry worker, grain miller, or cigar roller—returned home wearing dust to match the trade."

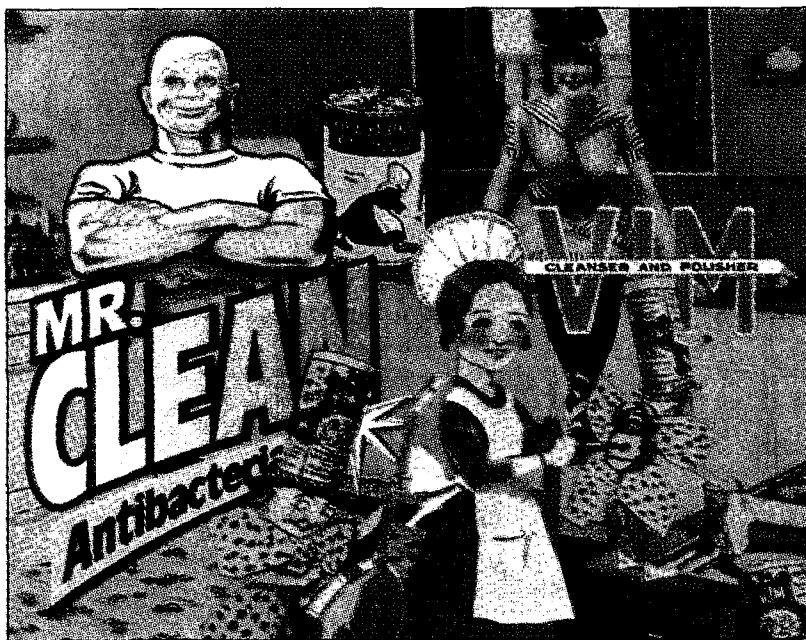
But these are all man-made dusts. The conquest of dirt has divorced humanity from the earth it once found so filthy and shameful. A few organic gardeners and

back-to-the-land rebels have tried to recapture the muddy past, but most of us continue the flight from our rustic origins, toward a life of greater sterility. We have come, Amato says, to prefer representations of life—movies, TV shows, computer games—to life itself. It's a good bet that more teen-agers have played the computer game *SimFarm* than have dirtied their boots by tramping through a soybean field, pulling weeds. Amato writes, "Virtual reality is the logical culmination of a society whose members,

lives and minds are removed from direct contact with the stuff of the world—its dust and dirt—and are constructed around the refinement and manipulation of human and natural environments."

Dust is still out there, for those who want to visit it. There are a few people who still spend their weekends camping or playing touch football in the mud. When they're done, though, they wash it all off with extra-strength Tide. ■

**Ted Kleine** frequently writes for *In These Times* and the *Chicago Reader*.



more space and things." Eventually, microbiology led to the pasteurization of milk, as well as treatments for tuberculosis, cholera, malaria, typhus, yellow fever and a host of other diseases caused by members of the invisible bestiary.

**T**he Enlightenment that inspired Spallanzani eventually spawned the Industrial Revolution, which fouled the air with smog and littered the ground with garbage, but also created "an arsenal of tools and chemicals for cleaning up bodies, homes, and cities. It mass-



# Queer Godfather

By Doug Ireland

One would be hard-pressed to name a more admirable contemporary American example of the intellectual *engagé* than Martin Duberman. Historian, playwright, memoirist, biographer, social commentator, teacher, activist and assured podium performer, Duberman is an unapologetic, uncategorizable and nonsectarian radical

**Left Out: The Politics of Exclusion**  
**Essays 1964-1999**  
By Martin Duberman  
Basic Books  
466 pages, \$30

whose constant questioning of conventional wisdoms—even on the left—has made him one of this country's pre-eminent participants in the political and cultural wars that have riven public life.

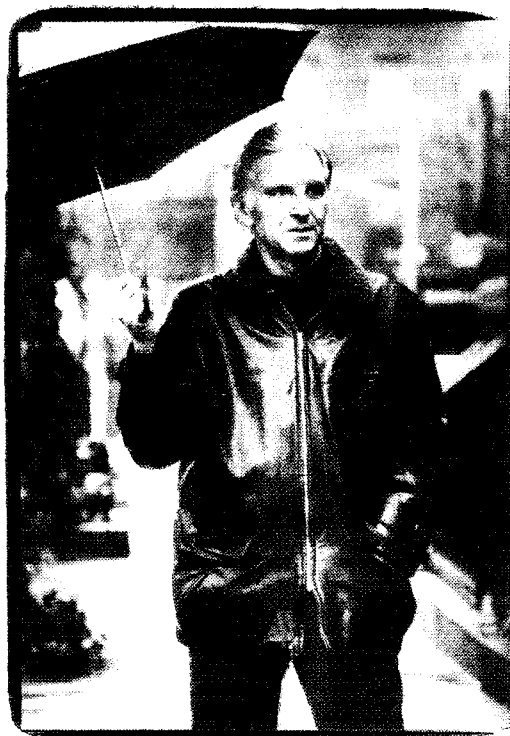
The prolific Duberman has written or edited some 35 books, and yet has still found time to churn out a remarkably wide-ranging series of occasional pieces that embody much of the passion and action of our time, some of which he has assembled in his new volume *Left Out*. They reflect his convictions about "the baleful influence of corporate culture, the iniquity of many aspects of American foreign policy, the tenacity of white racism, the nonpathological nature of same gender desire, the crippling falsity of the traditional male/female binary."

Duberman has been unshakably on the left for all of his adult life, and out of the closet as a gay male for the better part of it. Having survived the tortures of anti-gay psychotherapists (movingly recounted in his 1991 memoir, *Cures: A Gay Man's Odyssey*), Duberman was the first important intellectual to embrace the gay liberation movement that was born in the wake of the 1969 Stonewall riots. In the early '70s, Duberman was one of the moving spirits behind the founding of both the Gay Academic Union and of what is now the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force—and even then he was raising remarkably prescient questions that disturbed and provoked more staid same-sexers and single-issue separatists.

In his speeches and writings, Duberman urged the gay movement to confront the "same set of interlocking dilemmas that have characterized protest movements throughout our history. How to prevent a radical impulse from degenerating into reformist tinkering? How to mobilize a constituency for substantive change when most of the members of that constituency prefer to focus energies on winning certain limited concessions, like civil rights legislation, and show little interest in joining with other dispossessed groups to press for systemic social restructuring?" Duberman integrated his radical and gay identities to the profit of both, and sexual politics is at the heart of this anthology.

One of the jewels in this collection is a biographical essay on Donald Webster Cory (a pseudonym inspired by Gide's neglected homosexual elegy *Corydon*), a left-wing, self-taught intellectual who published *The Homosexual in America* (1951)—the first full-scale nonfiction account of American gay life—at the height of anti-homosexual purges in government and the private sector. The book, which argued for both homosexual self-acceptance and civil rights and denounced the myth that same-sex orientation could be "cured," made Cory the father of what was then known as the "homophile movement." Yet after a delayed accumulation of academic degrees in later years, the book's author, Edward Sagarin, a respected sociology professor and the president of the American Society of Criminology, devoted himself to denouncing the views he had once espoused as Cory. For anyone seriously interested in gay American history, this essay alone is worth the price of the book.

Elsewhere, in a 1977 essay provoked by the brutal murder of Robert Hillsborough, a 33-year-old San Francisco gay man who was stabbed 15 times by a gang of homophobic toughs, Duberman turns his thoughtfully right-



Martin Duberman, intellectual *engagé*.

eous anger into an attack on the anti-gay writings of conservative intellectuals like George Will and Michael Novak. Where Novak denounces same-sex relationships as pathological because they are "transient—far more so than among married men and women," Duberman replies:

Perhaps. Given the latest divorce figures and the absence of research on long-standing gay relationships, one can't be sure. But even if Novak is right, he fails to ask any of the questions that could provoke a genuinely searching inquiry into the meaning of 'transient.' ... Is it possible serial relationships might provide more optimal conditions for human happiness than lifetime pair-bonding? How many of those lifetime bondings are based on emotional insecurity, lack of options, financial necessity and ingrained cultural imperatives ("the welfare of the children," etc.)—and at what cost in terms of lost affiliation with a larger community, erotic dessication, and the perpetuation of female dependence? ... Many gay people reject the common assumption that a variety of sexual partners is incompatible with a lasting and loving primary relationship. Because gay people are less prone to

overinvest in the magical expectation that one other person can fulfill all their needs, the partnerships they do form are often marked by an impressive amount of egalitarian independence.

Duberman's words were written several years before the AIDS crisis made the gay movement for marriage equality with heterosexuals a necessary self-defense measure against the cruel prejudices inflicted on gay couples by relatives and the state—from hospital visitation, inheritance and child custody rights to tax and health care benefits. But Duberman's insistent sexual radicalism has inspired a new generation of queer thinkers like Michael Bronski and Michael Warner to keep extending the frontiers of a transformative liberationist perspective. Indeed, gay studies programs on a host of college campuses that help queers reclaim the past, analyze the present and imagine different futures are in no small measure due to Duberman's pioneering efforts. He founded the first Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies program officially recognized by academe at the City University of New York, where he is distinguished professor of history at both Lehman College and the Graduate School. *Left Out* makes it clear why many consider Duberman the godfather of modern "queer theory."

The problems of race too have long been a Duberman obsession, from his prize-winning 1964 play *In White America* to his landmark 1989 biography of Paul Robeson, which restored the multitalented man to his proper towering role in American culture and the civil rights and anti-colonial movements (a record largely obliterated by the U.S. government's vicious campaign against him at the height of the Cold War). *Left Out* contains several essays from the '60s explaining and defending black radicalism and the Black Power movement—written at a time when most white liberals were frightened of and hostile to both. It also contains Duberman's controversial *New York Times* essay defending William Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner* and a 1997 critique of Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom and other neoliberal intellectuals who oppose affirmative action.

Duberman also includes pieces written against the Vietnam and Gulf wars

and a friendly polemic with Hans Magnus Enzensberger on Cuba. Here too are essays on Duberman's classroom experiments in education that dissect academic rigidity (his 1972 history of the experimental Black Mountain College is a classic now widely taught in education classes); on campus radicalism in the '60s and '70s; and a piece on Norman Mailer and Kate Millett's assaults on Henry Miller that turns into a fascinating discussion of sex, love and promiscuity.

It is fitting that Duberman's anthology closes with an expanded and updated version of his 1996 essay "The Divided Left: Identity Politics Versus Class," in which he cuttingly upbraids the attacks on a caricatural version of identity politics by the likes of Todd Gitlin, Michael Tomasky, Richard Rorty, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Bogdan Denitch and others. Duberman attacks those whose "energy goes into writing patronizing screeds about the triviality or irrelevance of our grievances and insights." He notes, "We are also able to emphasize that the labor movement itself can quite reasonably be described as historically based on identity politics: For a long period it exclusively defended 'its own,' and class solidarity was reduced to

protecting union members *against* the great unwashed, unorganized mass of female and nonwhite workers." There's much more in this intellectually rich discussion, which ought to be required reading for progressive intellectuals and activists of all persuasions.

In a number of these pieces Duberman emphasizes a point that many of us who are both politically radical and gay have long understood and proclaimed: that being gay (especially after having emerged from the trauma of being closeted) has given us a broader emotional palette that allows us to understand and identify more fully with the victims of *all* the oppressions and exclusions that bedevil this world.

That's why, in a time when gay culture is subject to the conservative drift evident in society as a whole, Duberman writes: "We must stay on the left, or move there, because it's only on the left that one hears truths not otherwise acknowledged: that human agency, not biology or the Deity, has created the structures of inequality with which we now live, structures that have long ensured that privilege, wealth and power remain the possession of the few and immiseration the lot of the many."

Well said, Marty. ■

## No Jacket Required

By Joshua Rothkopf

When a book is described as "unfilmable," that's usually face-saving code for "unscreenable" (or "unwatchable").

**American Psycho**  
Directed by Mary Harron

Moviemakers like to be the self-appointed vulgarians—to spice up the Bard, say, or to bring consumable surface or sex to something previously headbound.

But when a novel comes along, like Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* did in 1991, staking a claim to the same salacious territory that the movies would mark off as their own, it becomes a game of catch-up, a fake show of deference to the written word. Ellis' manuscript, which barely got published after

first being dropped by Simon & Schuster, debuted to the kind of controversy that film publicists covet; sounds of lip-smacking were discernible in the din of cries of misogyny, racism, pornography. The book still reads like some kind of stunt, proving it was possible to turn out page after page armed only with the latest Zagat dining guide and a stack of designer catalogs.

This was exactly the point though: Patrick Bateman, Ellis' every-Yuppie narrator, dwells obsessively on his travelings—from elaborate squid appetizer to high-priced boutique to exclusive health club—and we're meant to be lulled by the details and name-dropping until Ellis can safely broadside us with something unbearably brutal. (Bateman is, in fact, a cannibalistic serial killer, although when and why that transformation occurs is not the author's concern.)



The acute tortures of fashion, corporate one-upmanship and status flaunting found their extension in tortures of the body; defenders insisted the savagery was essential. But Ellis' satire approached a blunt pun on conspicuous consumption; he was received as more the provocateur than decrifier of a decade's callousness.

With this in mind, the film version of *American Psycho* may be the best thing that ever could have happened to it. It has been picked up by Mary Harron, a director with feminist credentials (*I Shot Andy Warhol*); she and co-writer Guinevere Turner have sharpened the material into the pitch-black satire of male entitlement Ellis was likely intimating, while side-stepping much of the butchery he couldn't help but italicize. This may be disappointing news to those who (correctly) link the book's notoriety to its explicitness; Harron, it must be said, has not made a controversial film, but she has made a provocative one, a viciously funny *American Psycho* that, like Kubrick's *Lolita*, reveals more while showing less. It took shrewdness to realize the most detachable parts of the story were its extremities; what remains is something very sleek, hilarious-ly poreless and certainly not nice.

Every film adaptation requires a necessary shift in tactics, and Harron's *American Psycho* never could have mounted Ellis' deceptive banality in the time allotted by sticking to his pointillist accrual of neckties and nightspots. Instead she makes it work through careful selectivity, underlining the snobbish contest at the heart of every choice. Early on, young executives compare their newly printed business cards in an evolved form of fighting over the water-hole; Harron gives each card an ominous whoosh when it's brandished, cutting then to sweating embarrassment as subtle shades of bone are outclassed by even subtler guilt-edged embossings.

Elsewhere, Harron emphasizes the interchangeability that poses the ultimate threat to an identity defined by

designer labels; one victim seems doomed because he wears the same Oliver Peoples glasses and Valentino suit as Bateman, but their rivalry extends into the afterlife as Bateman realizes with



Life's a scream.

"sheer panic" that his dead prey had a nicer apartment. The ironic gloss gets its icing from the shorthand of Gideon Ponte's crisp production design pitched just shy of '80s parody: rooms of minimalist white and black beg for a splash of red—to be fastidiously absorbed by spread-out pages of the style section.

All of these formal strategies, successful though they are, pale in comparison to Harron's baroque conception of Patrick Bateman—the object at the center of all objects. This difficult part is played by Christian Bale with self-effacement and precise craft. He's nothing short of superb, a sham of stunning emptiness behind a mint facial mask—a wolfish Tom Cruise, buffed and grinning into mirrors as he sodomizes women in his bed. Everything about Bateman is a put-on, and Bale brings the same adrenalized level of constructed superficiality to everything he says, from his radio-ready opinions about a favorite album like Genesis' *Invisible Touch* to a cracked confession of his murderous acts that he leaves one night on his lawyer's answering machine. None of it registers as deeply felt—the voice seems oiled and expertly calibrated—and coming from Bale, an uncommonly sensitive actor

whose line readings often can be heart-breaking, it's almost frighteningly blank.

Like the book, the film doesn't do much with Bateman; his permanent glide from the night's dinner reservations to another violent episode suggests a go-go routine that's part of the satire. While Bale makes it all fascinating, this monotony is sure to offend all the right people, those who want to sup with their serial killers, luxuriate in their refinement for a while and still come out of the tunnel. More decidedly than Ellis, Harron pushes the material into a hypnotic trance that deflates any conventional expectations for lawful consequences; Bateman can drag a duffel bag leaking blood past his doorman and into a taxi trunk without an eyebrow being raised. Bateman has remarkably little to worry about; a pivotal scene in the book where a cab driver has

him potentially fingered is perversely omitted. But this impunity actually heightens the overall sense of menace—a blasé clubland where "murders and executions" is misheard for "mergers-and-acquisitions."

Harron's major departure from Ellis is in her handling of the women characters who, not insignificantly, graduate from being helplessly disposable to genuinely forlorn. They still meet horrible ends, but since much of this is not shown, Harron reaps the sophisticated kind of horror that lingers on poor choices, on victims stumbling unwittingly into the trap. The standout is Chloë Sevigny as Bateman's secretary, afraid of falling in love with the boss: "I don't want to get bruised," she tells him, and the line is alarmingly unaware. Harron shades and deepens Ellis with a cautionary resonance; these women are terrible judges of character, better to serve her indictment of a cultural condition that would make a homicidal maniac desirable.

This may not be the *American Psycho* many remember. Harron has flattered the book by taking it seriously and perceiving its greater ramifications. But you still might find the jilted down at the bookshop thumbing through Ellis' pages for the juicy bits they missed. Stay away from these people. ■

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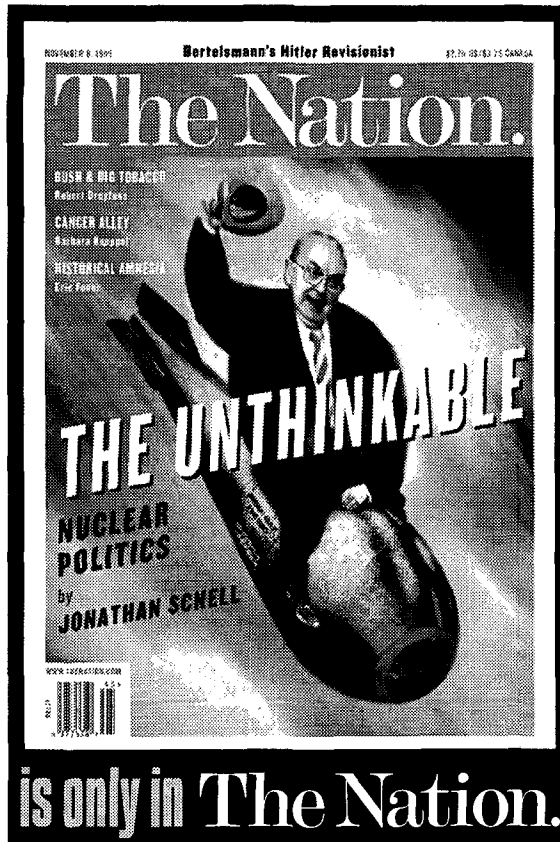
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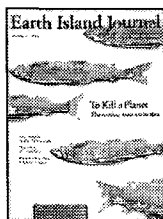
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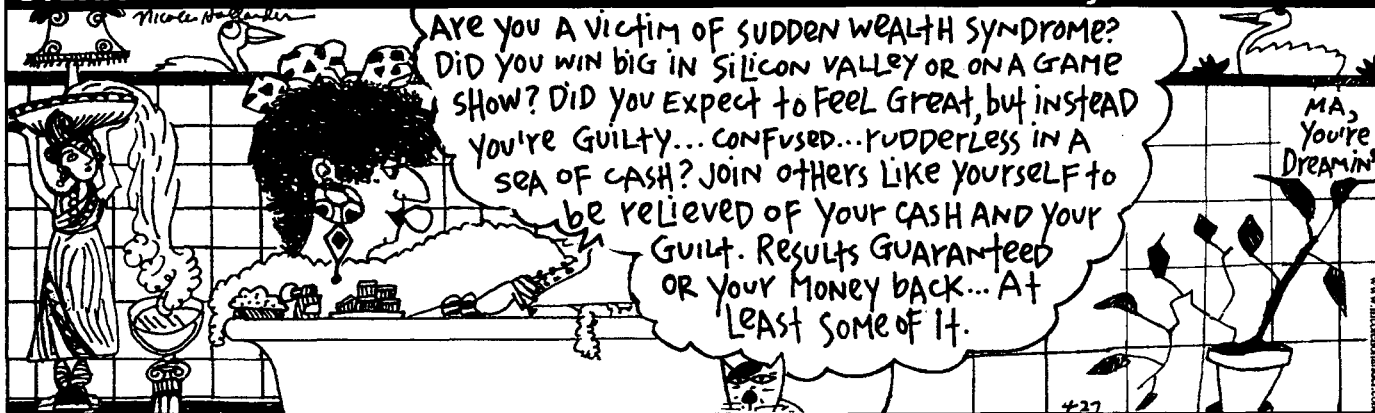
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SYLVIA

By Nicole Hollander





*Continued from page 30*

Mary. In the background float seemingly abstract butterflies, which on inspection turn out to be cutouts of women's genitalia from skin magazines. The mayor, with an uncanny Freudian precision, ignored the vaginas and fixated on the dung, invoking a grand world-historical narrative: "Civilization has been about trying to find the right place to put excrement, not on the walls of museums," he declared.

But there is no convenient carpet under which to sweep the waste products of American progress: the homeless, the uninsured, the unemployed, the temporary, the underpaid, the downsized. Our collective coprophobic response has been to cover our eyes, a reflex enacted in the mass exodus to the suburbs: anywhere will do, as long as our refuse can't be seen. Thus excrement, symbolic or literal, placed in a museum, where we go to look at things, is disturbing. The disturbance becomes more pronounced when the threatening object—garbage or dung—is not merely depicted, but is itself part of the artwork. In such art, the critic Arthur Danto observes, "The insulating boundaries between art and life are breached in some way [that] the mere representation of disturbing things cannot achieve just because they are representations and responded to as such."

Consider, for example, the following two works: In 1992, Andres Serrano exhibited "Morgue," a series of photographs of dead people, titled by disease ("AIDS," "meningitis," etc.); in the second century B.C., the Greek artist Somos of Pergamum created a mosaic tile floor that depicted the refuse and garbage of a hearty feast. Both works portray subjects with some potential to disturb. But our disturbance can

be tempered by aesthetic appreciation of a work's composition—the pleasing relationships among the shapes, the use of light or color. "No matter what you think of the content, they are undeniably beautiful as photographs," said a reviewer of Serrano's pictures.

Abstracted from their representational context, the works don't threaten us: We have nothing to fear from colored pieces of tile or the glossy paper of a photo print. But Drew's

pieces defy such disarmament; they do not depict trash; they are trash. Every attempt at abstraction is brought up short, because we cannot look at them without seeing a new, previously unnoticed and very real artifact—a doll's head, a toy truck, a speedometer. Try as we might, we cannot force these things to be mere placeholders of compositional relationships.

One can imagine Drew outdoing Somos and constructing, out of trash, a mosaic depicting trash. But such a work would be turned in on itself, a reflection on representation, an artwork about artworks. "Directions,"

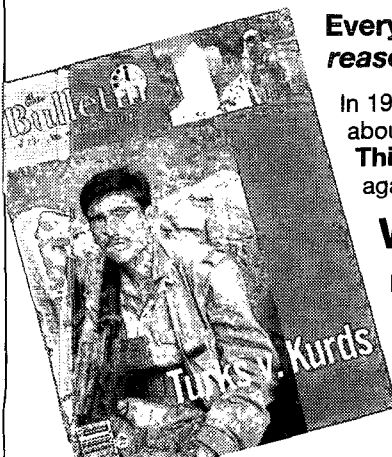
on the contrary, turns us outward: As you step back from Drew's mammoth center mosaic, "Untitled #77," it resolves into a rough aerial view of the greater New York area: Manhattan swimming in a sea of trash. From horizon to horizon, we're wallowing in our own waste.

And yet in Drew's art, the situation is not hopeless. Even junk can sometimes take its fate into its own hands: Asked about some bits of tape that cling at random to the pieces, Drew remarked that they had been blown accidentally onto the sculpture during its construction: "If they hang on," he explained, "they get to stay." ■

Caleb Mason teaches literature and philosophy at Columbia University and in the SUNY system.

**Drew's sculptures—  
massive, heterogeneous,  
untitled—are occasions  
for reflection, cultural  
inkblots: at once familiar  
and unsettling.**

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# Remembrance of Things Trashed

By Caleb Mason

**A**t the opening of his new exhibit, "Directions," at the Hirshorn Museum in Washington, Leonardo Drew was asked whether his work is political. He responded that his art should speak for itself. And it did a moment later. No sooner had the tide of ques-

machine (in pieces), a blow dryer, a baseball, rusted scrap metal, cassette tapes, a spiral notebook—the list could go on for pages. What the objects have in common is that they've all been discarded; Drew gets his materials from scrap yards, landfills and the street. They are the excrement of consumer culture, held up in public view to be gazed at, to be objects of respect, meditation, even desire. We never relinquish our fascination with feces, said Freud, we only sublimates it.

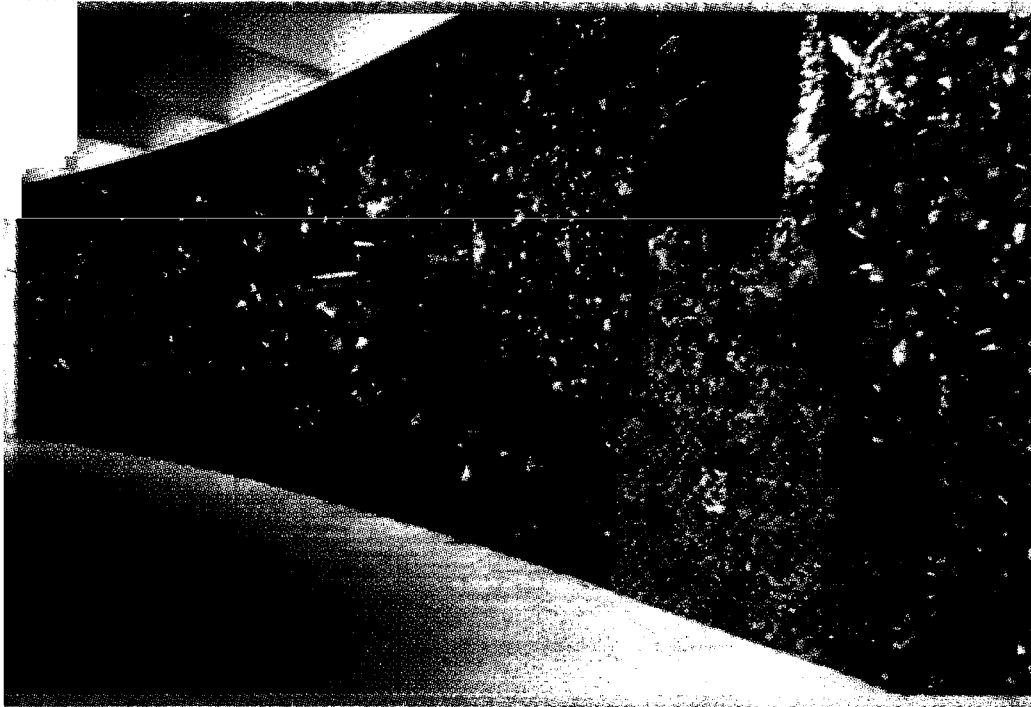
But one of the more surprising discoveries is how much of the junk has made it through the nation's intestinal tract intact: almost everything here is, if not usable, at least recyclable. These materials aren't available for art in the undeveloped world, Drew noted at the opening. Working on a similar project in Brazil, he found that "they use all this stuff. It's not junk, it's gold." This art is made possible by America's material wealth and prodigality, and the frantic imperatives of overproduction.

**T**he use of cast-off materials helps place Drew in the history of African-American art. Painters of the Harlem Renaissance like Horace Pippin and Lorenzo Homar often painted on plywood with cheap

gouache or egg tempera. Their subject matter was "trash," too: working-class street life, ordinary people in prosaic urban contexts. Perhaps even closer to Drew's work are urban street murals, which are often devoted to memorializing and beatifying the dead and heroic. The wall is the street mural's setting and surface, usually a forgotten, abandoned space, left for dead as white America retreats into the suburbs. The painting of wall murals is an act of defiant recycling, a refusal to be disposable, a refusal to die.

The excrement of prosperity is not just hunks of plastic and metal. It's the stench of the exploitation that produced those hunks, and of the hollow and fleeting satisfactions bought by their momentary consumption. It's uncomfortable to see our own waste sifted and mounted at the Smithsonian. The tourist's reaction recalls New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani's indictment of Chris Ofili's "Blessed Virgin Mary" painting in the Brooklyn Museum of Art's "Sensation" exhibit last fall. The British-Nigerian Ofili's painting incorporates, in traditional West African style, several clumps of dried elephant dung into a highly stylized

*Continued on page 29*



tioners and admirers receded than a portly tourist couple, outfitted with fanny packs, guidebooks and cameras, poked their heads in to take a look at the exhibit. "It's just a bunch of trash stuck on the wall!" exclaimed the man, recoiling in disgust.

Drew's new wall-mounted sculptures—massive, heterogeneous, untitled—are occasions for reflection, cultural inkblots, hyperactive cousins of Rothko's black-on-black "Chapel" canvases: at once familiar and unsettling. They demand, and reward, patient and detailed examination. "Directions" consists of three large mosaics: panels constructed of small squares of plywood, each with a piece of junk or consumer detritus glued to it, joined together by the thousands to form vast agglomerations; the largest piece is 14 by 56 feet.

One is struck first by the diversity of objects comprising the mosaics: lightbulbs, dishes, bottles, computer cables, vacuum tubes, seat belt clips, assorted car parts, shoes, children's toys and dolls, circuit boards, a torn postcard of Jesus, a transistor radio, a football, an iron, a sewing